



PHD

**The stalking ground: Some varieties of human conduct seen in and through a frame of ritual.**

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... THE STALKING GROUND:  
SOME VARIETIES OF HUMAN CONDUCT  
SEEN IN AND THROUGH A FRAME OF RITUAL

submitted by Andrew Travers  
for the degree of PhD  
of the University of Bath  
1981

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### Summary

Erving Goffman's idea that persons in interaction can be understood if they are thought to have the property of "ritualness" is extended. A theory of interaction, that interactions are interactive to the degree that persons within them have "ritual power", develops itself. Persons are then seen as "possessions", and the sociological state, "rapture", of an audience when it is deeply moved by a fully possessed performer is taken as one pole of a new dimension of interaction whose other pole is interaction at the point of its ceasing to be interaction. Thus, into the social psychology of interaction is introduced an idea nowhere else even conjectured, that is, interactional life. But this life of everyday life - which I call the ritual realm - is only there through the appearances of life, though these, I contend, are not properly understood either literally or reductively any more than words are properly understood as sounds and letters alone.

### Acknowledgements

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have been very helpful with this thesis.

All my life needed was a sense of some place to go. I don't believe that one should devote his life to morbid self attention. I believe that someone should become a person like other people.

Travis Bickle in Martin Scorsese's film Taxi Driver

I'm asking you to please look into your heart and at least give me the chance with this historical deed to gain your respect and love.

John Hinckley, would-be assassin of President Reagan, in a letter to the actress who played Bickle's prostitute in Taxi Driver

For after all, there are no half measures. Either it is reality or it is fiction. Either one opts completely for art or for chance. For construction or for actuality. Why is this so? Because in choosing one, you automatically come round to the other.

Jean-Luc Godard

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## Introduction

This thesis contributes to the sociological study of interactions, in the belief that, if these are not understood, all other social groupings will be inadequately understood. A large part of my argument is also directed against the possibility of there being a non-sociological psychology that could have relevance to staple social science categories like "person".

Throughout, I ignore the substantive content of interactions and also, very often, their contexts. My exemplar here has been Erving Goffman, whose work persuades me that this delimitation of interest may not fatally damage an analysis. So, my view of the world is eccentric, and, because of that, clearer than one which would attempt what I regard as an impossible comprehensibility. The following quotation from Susan Sontag's (1979) book On Photography, if the words "photograph" and "photographer" are replaced by sociology and sociologist, sums up my current views on the activity in which I am engaged:

The contingency of photographs confirms that everything is perishable; the arbitrariness of photographic evidence indicates that reality is fundamentally unclassifiable. Reality is summed up in an array of casual fragments - an endlessly alluring, poignantly reductive way of dealing with the world ... the photographer's insistence that everything is real also implies that the real is not enough.

I would add that some part of my motivation in this thesis is the hopeless task of making the real "real enough". At least I shall answer the questions, "Real enough for what?" and "What is 'enough'?".

### Style of the Thesis

Most of the writing that follows is in essay style, and my language at times is allowed to become dramatic.

The essay style is the only appropriate one for my dual purpose of developing an argument and mobilising some new concepts, and it is, furthermore, inevitable, given the lack of pertinent data, which lack has thrown me onto my own persuasive resources. Of course, I do draw on a considerable amount of self-collected data, but this, in my view, is quite insufficient to warrant more than guided speculations. In the thesis I use my data for illustrative purposes mostly, though prior to writing I was to some extent enraptured (this is one of my new concepts) by it; also I continually reference - but do not write down - my own experience of interactions, for not to do so in the case of a thesis like this strikes me as purblind.

As for the language, it is sometimes given free rein so that it goes "too far". This is in the belief - variously set forth by very many writers on methodology including White (1978), Roche (1973), Jameson (1972), Brown (1977), Churchland (1979), Gergen (1977), Mills

(1940), and Silverman & Torode (1980) - that the matter of a verbal analysis is often lodged in its manner or style. Accordingly, I assume that new germane matter might be generated by "freeing up" the prose here and there. The cost of this sort of self indulgence unfortunately is that it may at times distract the reader from the main themes, but it is also entirely possible that one or two of the distractions may eventually turn out to be very promising leads into future analyses. The kind of current tradition to which I am intellectually affiliated in sociology, therefore, would be one that could say through a spokesman such as T.R. Young (1980):

Social science methodology in its quantitative mode should recognise the primitive character of its operations and not insinuate these as superior to folk methods. One should realize that quantification is a process by which the richness of everyday life is made progressively more barren as it proceeds. One discards information (variety) as human behavior is organized into word sets. Still more information is discarded as one transfers data from words sets into number sets - a number set is simply not as informative as a word set since word sets are not limited by the constraints of number sets - ordinality, intervality, and rationality. One loses still more information as one converts descriptive parameters into summary statistics. Quantification, then, is a process by which information is systematically discarded. One must not assume that, since valuable information is obtained by such distillation, this knowledge surpasses that produced by symbolic interaction using words or by behavioral interaction.

If the quality of human life is intimately connected to the quality of its symbolic systems (as indeed they are), then passion, anger, joy, disgust, hope and rage should not be excluded from the pages of authentically human endeavor. The languages of business, mathematics, computers and science are too poor a vehicle upon which to place the fate of human society. They are too meagre, too remote, and too barren a soil in which to plant ideas.

## New Concepts of the Thesis

My main source of conceptual inspiration has been Erving Goffman's formulation of persons as ritual beings. From this I have generated the new concept of "ritual power", which I argue for in Part Two. Ritual power is akin to the theatrical notion "presence", and I try to show that presence is self-possession to a high degree. This leads me to propose that persons - insofar as they are ritual beings who may gain or lose ritual power through their performances in interactions - may be viewed as "possessions". The new concept of "possession" has several advantages over that of "role" or "part" or even "self". First of all, it implies a coherent and conscious being who is not to be best analysed by recourse to his psychology or physiology. Secondly, in that possessions disappear if reductively analysed, they are specifically ritual phenomena, and, therefore, of all the ways there are of speaking about persons, this is the one that stays closest to the idea (drawn from Goffman) that persons are persons because they have "ritualness". Possession, I shall be arguing, can be seen as wholly ritual entities whose proper world I call the "ritual realm". The ritual realm has to be understood as that projection from a person's appearances of the intelligible form of his possession. In human interaction, I suggest, the ritual realm functions very much as does perspective in two-dimensional photographs: the ritual realm is a moral dimension of conduct simply not visible when behaviour is coded literally or analysed in the absence of value judgements, for instance in the



work of both microanalysts and ethnomethodologists. Towards the end of the thesis, I set out one more new concept: "rapture". This is the corollary to possession in interaction. It arises if one person's self-possession is particularly fascinating (by being so well acted that the ritual realm it appears to originate in is very clear) when other persons (in their capacity as audience) will feel rapture at their temporary loss of themselves in that possession.

Obviously I shall be introducing all these concepts one at a time and with a fair amount of argumentation, but it is, I think, at this stage, helpful for the reader to see that there are not too many of them - "ritual power", "possession", "ritual realm", and "rapture" - and that they are closely linked together by their all having grown out of Goffman's idea of "ritualness" in interaction.

The main argument of the thesis, then, will be that these concepts are positively demanded for a full understanding of human interaction.

At no point in the development of this argument have I tried to disentangle myself from my assumptions or from the social context in which I have written and read and researched. I have settled instead for being as conscious as I can be, at all times, of what I bring

to the analysis from those selves of mine who are strangers to sociology. I shall indicate in the methodology chapter that I think that any other course of analytic action, given the natures of persons and of language, would reduce speech to an endlessly self-complicating apology for itself, which I assume is not the best kind of speech there can be. A consequence of my ethnocentricity, therefore, is that I occasionally make my position clear by contrasting it to some other current position that for the reader may only be a latent, hidden presence (off-stage, as it were). The hope is that the position made clear can then stand independently.

#### Plan of the Thesis

What I term the "ritual code" is discovered by the activity of researching interactions, and I explain this process in the early methodology chapter which precedes a definitive statement, made largely in his words, of Erving Goffman's ritual frame, the only such frame in sociology.

Having established the potential of Goffman's notion of ritualness, I describe two groups of persons, punks and nurses, with a view to finding out how they make themselves what they are in their interactions. My conclusion is that the concept of ritual power is necessary to a proper description of the conduct of punks and nurses.

By now, and for the rest of the thesis, off and on, the idea of fashion is running through the narrative like a leitmotif. In the chapter "Fashionable Ritual" I even assert that ritual power is gained by fashionable conduct, and then, in the first three chapters of Part Three, I keep returning to this idea while explaining the concept of possession in some of its ramifications. Throughout, it is implicit that fashion conduct is originality on the cheap, that originality is ritually powerful, that what is morally good is fashionable conduct, that conduct is modelled after its staged representations, and that these latter entertain most when their drama is the resolution of conflicting conduct fashions.

In Chapter IX, I change the perspective and look at possession from the audience's point of view. Tentatively, the hypothesis surfaces that there can be no comprehension of anything without some emotional experience like that of a theatre audience's when it is being moved or transported.

Finally the "Summary and Conclusions", though they do carefully recapitulate the argument of the thesis, actually read like a parallel narrative. The idea here is that richer meaning can be created when two slightly different ways of saying the same thing are placed side by side. This is perfectly in keeping with the notion of a ritual realm: the thesis can be interpreted as two distinct enactments coming from the same realm, which

is the better charted by stereoscopic verbal vision.

I conclude this introduction with a quotation from  
Feyerabend (in Hollinger, 1980):

Knowledge is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps even incommensurable) alternatives, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation, and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness. Nothing is ever settled, no view can ever be omitted from a comprehensive account ... Experts and laymen, professionals and dilettanti, truth-freaks and liars - they are all invited to participate in the contest and to make their contributions to the enrichment of our culture. The task of the scientist ... is no longer to "search for the truth," or to "praise God," or to "systematize observations," or to "improve predictions." These are but side effects of any activity to which his attention is mainly directed and which is to make the weaker case the stronger (as the sophists said) and thus to sustain the motion of the whole.

From the point of view of Feyerabend, my thesis will  
seem unnecessarily careful.

## Part One

## CHAPTER I

### RITUAL REASONS FOR A RITUAL CODE

This thesis is "interpretive" sociology as Tudor (1976) defines this<sup>1</sup> and at times I implicitly ask the reader to test its assertions against his own experience. However, I do not mean to be read in a literary way as, for example, Erving Goffman, who writes better than I do, has been said to ask readers to so read him (Cioffi, 1971), because if there is such a response as a literary one to this text (or, for that matter, to Goffman's texts) it would come about only after cognitive appreciation, which is a reversed route to that noted by Raymond Williams and F.R. Leavis as the one by which literature has its effect on readers<sup>2</sup>. Having said this, I must admit that I do not see language as being ideally suited to cognitive expression, for reasons that Tyler (1978), among many others, puts forward. But even when I "swerve" (White, 1978), preferring an aphorism to stylistic exhaustiveness, I mean to appeal to the mind ahead of the senses and the emotions, and only write as I do then because then I equate analytic exhaustiveness with stylistic brevity. Thus, I try to avoid "prattle", which

Barthes (1976) defines as: "An unweaned language - imperative, automatic, unaffectionate, a minor disaster of static." I am informed here by the following:

The intellect is naïve and, too often, vulgar.  
(Bateson, 1978)

We are scientific because we lack subtlety.  
(Barthes, 1976)

Most human communication is incredibly rich,  
closer to poetry than mathematics.  
(Pittenger et al, 1960)

Understanding a sentence is much more akin to  
understanding a theme in music than one may think.  
(Wittgentstein, 1963)

So it is that, no more than I tried to conduct research in the manner of a Routine Observational Boob (Douglas, 1977) or an Ideal Sentential Automaton (Churchland, 1979), do I expect the reader to read in like persona.

Any research report is talk about absent others. Yerkovich (1976) has shown that such talk in a "folk science" mode (Young, 1980) creates people as moral characters by concentrating on their sanctionable conduct. Abstract evaluative categories develop and - in the talk - a small moral community comes into being. This is what gossip is, of course, and I suggest here that reports should not forget that when they are about people they are a strange variant of gossip. Remembering

this, a writer at least might refrain from the worst excesses of scientising prose; and if the writer, as I would, wishes to write as a person rather than as Douglas's boob or Churchland's automaton he is likely to be drawn to the topic of good and bad conduct, as I am.

My choice of moral conduct as an analytic starting point, of course, shows that a value of mine is that this is worth studying. A further value I hold is that one should value one's values, so I ask the reader to just accept this and therefore save me from pulling this chapter out of its course by justifying values whose justifications would have to be justified and so on.

Writing, too, is conduct, but I have avoided reflexivity in this text, because even if the text does write me (Ricoeur, 1976; Silverman & Torode, 1980; Booth, 1961) I would rather be a textual fool than the mass of my words disappearing into itself that Foucault (1979) recommends:

We can say that today's writing has freed itself from the dimension of expression. Referring only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier. Writing unfolds like a game that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits. In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language,



it is rather a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears.

I want now to expand on my bald statement in the "Introduction" that I have not tried to "disentangle myself from my assumptions," and will do this by contrasting my position to the one advocated by Glaser & Strauss (1968) in their book, The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Glaser & Strauss say that "categories" and then theories "emerge" from data, into which the researcher puts minimal pre-emptive interpretation. I find this nonsensical, because categories can only be named in the consciousness of the researcher, which is the more encompassing the more subtly interpretive it is. As Popper (1977) says:

We observe only what our problems, our biological situation, our interests, our expectations and our action programmes make relevant. Just as our observational instruments are based upon theories, so are our very sense organs, without which we cannot observe. There is no sense organ in which anticipating theories are not genetically incorporated ... our sense organs are products of adaptation - they can be said to be theories, or to incorporate theories: theories come before observation, and so they cannot be the results of repeated observation.

What is more, "after the moment of the observer's birth no observation can be undertaken in all innocence. We always know something already, and this knowledge is intimately involved in what we come to know next" (Kaplan, 1964)<sup>3</sup>. So Glaser & Strauss's "mindless" collection of data and uncritical immersion in it repudiates the very means by which there can be any

data at all, or any thoughts about it. This is why I make a point of saying that when I operate as a researcher I operate wide awake and in as thinking a mode as possible, never forgetting that there are no pure data "because there are only data for some hypothesis or other" (Kaplan, 1964). In other words, I do my best to develop my ideas through whatever encountered material they can use. Silverman & Jones (1976) say such a course is the only conceivable possibility, since, as there is no "neutral" ground, bias (as they call it) is the necessary condition for apprehending reality.

Much of my thesis, then, is concerned with the morality of conduct (though not with the morality of the thesis) and I continually reference what I call the "ritual code". What is this code? First of all it is an "occasioned corpus", of which this telling is but one small part. Even attempts to explain or describe it are merely peculiar ways of exhibiting it, since the code cannot be switched off, as it were, during an operation calling itself explanation. To clarify my distinction here between "telling" and explaining, I now give an outline of how telling works in "The Convict Code: A Study of a Moral Order as a Persuasive Activity" in which Donald Wieder (1969) discovered a convict code which is a variant of the ritual code.

In a halfway house for paroled Californian narcotics felons, Wieder found that he could not practise participant observation because inmates would not let him befriend them:

It would be an understatement to say that I was dismayed by "getting put in my place" by references to the code. For a week or so I thought I could learn nothing more about the lives of the residents.

It was when he tried to understand his putative failure as a researcher that Wieder stumbled across the convict code. This code includes maxims such as, "Do not trust staff, staff is heat," and these maxims account for the mistrust with which Wieder's attempts to participate were met:

If you asked a question, as a device to get the conversation going, while it was the case that you might get a response, the conversation kept going only so long as you developed devices to get a response out of the resident. If you stopped making that kind of effort, the conversation just ended. The experience was of not ever getting the conversation going. I experienced the conversational style as isolating, embarrassing and telling me that I was not acceptable - that I did not belong. The effect was that of being a stranger among a lot of persons that were talking together but not letting me in.

Hurt by interactions like these, Wieder began to formulate the concept of a convict code. He is absolutely certain, however, that he needed the code in embryo form in order to create the code he eventually told. For him, the code was an "interpretive device" as it was for residents, because it was consequential within the halfway house, as "instructive oral traditions"

for outsiders could not have been. Used by residents to interpret their conduct, the code was "a guide to perception" of reportable patterned conduct:

The code then, is a title of a normative order in search of its component maxims and behaviors which it analyses and explains. The activation of the search, which the code title suggests, is achieved by an observer who actively interprets the indexical particulars (the imbedded "bits and pieces" whose sense is determined by their seen relevance to some content) of talk and action, and in so doing constitutes the setting as an ordered setting for himself that he can live in and with.

... the stable organization of the halfway house is the attainment of guided imagination which searches for sense through concretely experienced scenes.

Wieder was repeatedly offered "moral characterizations which made reference to the code," and so this code, although only one of many theoretically possible codes, acted as "moral persuasion and justification".

Explanation of conduct in terms of the code has to be moral justification in order to disambiguate behaviours and place them in an ongoing conceptual structure whose main clarifying device is to sort conduct into the two categories of good and bad, good being that which tells the code and bad being that which goes against it. (Wieder's participant observation went against it, and so also did every attempt of staff to therapize inmates by what inmates called "grouping" - the practice of publicly looking for motives that were supposed to be hard to locate.) The code is a moral one because he who does not orient to it with sufficient competence is defined as "unserious". Though Wieder does not develop his

analysis in this direction, it looks as if the code, which uses the categories of good and bad to sort conduct, relies on a fundamental definition of a person as a being who can choose to be good or bad, since those perceived as not being able to so choose cease to be treated as full persons. Indeed, in the halfway house, the reputational sanction of stripping a person of his value and status as a person enforced the code among staff, inmates, and researcher alike:

[Some staff] were described by the residents as stupid, square, fools, naive, and could not be respected. Residents coined derogatory nicknames for staff members that were particularly troublesome to them. They passed these names on to other staff members accompanied by demeaning stories about the staff member in question's competence. Staff employed these names and stories to degrade each other. Staff would say of each other things like, "John is really a square. He thought he could get these guys to help him set up a play; you should hear what these residents have to say about him."

Because telling the code is an integral part of the conduct it interprets, any sociological description, including Wieder's, is only one further instance of "the product which results from the uses of practices whereby 'telling the code' is achieved."

From this it can be seen that the ritual code of human conduct, just like Wieder's convict code, can never be completely told, since each telling is a further interpretative act informed by all previous tellings and informing all future tellings. However, if in the telling it is not exhaustively explained or if in the telling it seems to resist a convergent analysis that

in any case would nail it to nothing more substantial than pretensions to conclusiveness, it can at least be isolated and illuminated as an interpretive device.

The ritual code like any other code that would be told, of course, must be known prior to its exploration. That this code does ~~not~~ originate in a particular community but comes instead from the work of Erving Goffman, who took it from Emile Durkheim, need not weaken its meaning and credibility, for as Wieder found, a code cannot be told in detail unless first it is grasped somehow or other. No code to begin with, no code ever after. I grasped the ritual code as I found it in Erving Goffman, but there will be many other places to find it.

I think it relevant at this point to preface the "Ritual Frame of Erving Goffman" (which is the next chapter) with some thoughts on Goffman's own acquisition of the code. These I derive from observations I made during one week of the spring of 1980 in the Shetland village where Goffman, doing his PhD fieldwork, first hit on the analytical necessity to view interacting persons as ritual beings.

Goffman first introduces his ritual frame in his thesis, "Communication Conduct in an Island Community", where he uses it to interpret the conduct of crofters and gentry in Baltasound, a tiny settlement and port

which is the largest of three centres of habitation on the island of Unst, the northernmost Shetland island. It was in and around Baltasound that Goffman studied social conduct by "observant participation" (Goffman, 1953) for twelve months of the seventeen-month period, December 1949 to May 1951.

The first thing to be experienced by the visitor to the barren island of Unst is the unusual openness to surveillance of its scattered dwellings. The houses and cottages in this community of some 300 people (now as then) are not oriented to a mainstreet proper, and all the principal gathering places - village hall, post office, shop, school, hotel, and so on - are a good walk from one another. Thus, people in their everyday traffic are well spread out too, always seeing and being seen from a long way off. Moreover, there are few occasions when a person will be seen by someone unknown to him or her, for in Baltasound, though there may be occasional strangers, no one could long remain one. In this environment, the visitor soon begins to feel the need for the "expressive responsibility" of Goffman's thesis, and this certainly has to be very great here, for one is always being watched, if not by other persons then by sheep, ponies, birds, seals, and, from the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, fishing vessels. It is only a hunch, of course, but I think that Goffman in this space that is exposed to every kind of eye, at a period in his life when for the first time he was intensely scrutinizing his fellow man, must have

over-emphasised the theme of mutual accountability in social life.

Because each islander is known to every other islander and because islanders work, play, and sleep on the same nine miles long by four miles wide "piece of rock ... covered by a thin skin of poor soil" (Goffman, 1953), the place almost defines itself as a total institution (Goffman, 1968). This theme Goffman encountered again, but much more thoroughly stated, five years after leaving Unst, in his year-long participant observation study of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington D.C., but, subtly and unacknowledged, it is present in the thesis. Nearly all the interactions that Goffman studied must have been between people not only well known to one another but also unlikely to ever socially escape one another in the future, as in a total institution, and so all interactions may have been conducted with a greater sense than usual of what they might portend. Given, too, the elaborate background expectancies possessed by islanders in such situations, one can see how conduct could have been often a taxing interpersonal problem even in trivial, routine encounters. This, then, is the basis of my second hunch, that, on the island, interaction is a more serious business than, say, in a city neighbourhood,

However, no one who knew Erving Goffman during his period of study had any inkling of what he was really



up to. He used a cover story as a spy might, telling islanders that his research interest was "in gaining firsthand experience in the economics of island farming" (Goffman, 1953). Thus his participation in social life was not a participation as an islander would have understood that. It was in fact an extremely scientific procedure - in the positivist sense of being emotionally detached, with a strong motivation to be objective - carried out by one man on his fellow men. (It would not be surprising if this experience - of being a successful spy - did not activate Goffman's interest in spying which came to fruition in the first essay of Strategic Interaction) So, on top of the fact that he was in a place where everyday encounters were expressively delicate and demanding to a high degree, Goffman was a person with much to hide, who, as he says, had he been discovered to have been taking an interest in interaction, would not have survived in the setting, since "residents would not readily accept as friend and neighbour someone who asked formal questions about interaction or someone who showed an unnatural interest in matters of that kind" (Goffman, 1953). There must be, then, a strong possibility that Goffman, not only with something to hide but also with an anxiety to keep himself viable in his research site, was abnormally sensitive to the nuances of interaction in Baltasound, quite apart from his scientific interest. So while inevitably sharpening his perception, his own social situation surely led Goffman to overstate the treacherousness of interaction, when he calls it,

for example, a "cold war" (Goffman, 1953), and perhaps it is because of this that there is hardly anything in the thesis, or indeed ever after, that dwells on people's pleasure in sociability, besides a brief mention of "euphoric interplay", which, described as well-nigh impossible, is never analytically developed.

The crofters Goffman researched are still, almost thirty years later, a closed culture, distrustful of outsiders and keeping themselves to themselves by speaking their own half Norse and half Scots dialect. Goffman certainly was accepted by them, probably because his "farming research" cover-story gave him pretexts, but at all times, as a Canadian, he would have been in the position of having to learn his way in an alien culture with little help coming from any spoken words. This, then, might be a contributory reason for Goffman's decision to analytically exclude the "official" substance of language in encounters, in his thesis and for the rest of his career.

In this context that I have described, Erving Goffman's behaviour as a scientist can easily be seen as showing, then, a lack of reverence to other people, on two counts. Firstly, he spied on aspects of their conduct that he knew they themselves believed should not be raised into consciousness, and, secondly, he did not tell them that he was doing this. Consequently I argue that Goffman arrived at the ritual code by the same route that Wieder

took to get to the convict code; it was his very awareness that he was committing offences by being scientific that alerted him to the set of rules that is there to protect people's ritual worth. A whole complex of uneasy experiences with regard to the respect that is owed to people would be - for the young Goffman - explained at a stroke by a ritual code which then becomes a means perceiving more yet of persons' ritual conduct.

In the next chapter, before developing it a little more, I provide a definitive statement of the ritual code as Goffman - beginning with his research in Baltasound - has told it.

## Notes

1 Tudor (1976) writes: "As long as we can agree with the analysis, it appears as an unproblematic construction of reality shared between ourselves and the researcher. When we disagree, then we must ask why. And in so asking we find that the only possible reply is that, in our experience, this particular claim or interpretation does not hold true. So the very process of writing interpretive sociology tacitly demands of the reader that he make the test which will, in its limited way, 'warrant' the account. But because the process remains an implicit expectation its status is disturbingly unclear. Only by rendering test criteria open and explicit can we begin to judge the characteristics of our knowledge claims." This seems to me reasonable, so I have been open and explicit.

2 I do not disagree with Zollschan & Overington's (1976) assertion that the "argumentative form of scientific speech must attend to what is the most convincing rhetoric" for a particular scientific public, but rather suggest that the rhetoric in Goffman's case, with, for instance, its very frequent use of the first person plural, which enlists the reader into the writer's company so that both seem to share the same point of view of the phenomena under analysis, finds its plausibility less through reports of highly acceptable tests than by highly acceptable reports that are their very own tests, which the reader is invited to make with the writer as each goes along with the other.

Taylor & Cohen (1980) have remarked that only Goffman and Simmel, among sociologists, speak to them as persons, and Harre (1979) says exactly the same thing. So Goffman does have a recognized ability to take sociology farther into the lives of his public than any of his contemporaries, by going directly to experiences he and they have in common and by writing sociologically about these so well that his sociology immediately seems to illuminate and charge with relevance hitherto dim and overlooked areas

of social life. The scientific value of Goffman then is established by his ability to write for his fellow scientists as persons, which by the circular argument that their readership constitutes his authority, must also establish that it can be unscientific to write as if the reader is tightly straightjacketed by his consciousness of himself as a scientist before or in spite of or against himself as a person.

- 3 Some of this argument and both the quotes from Kaplan come from Peter Cumberlidge's "The Derivation of Explanatory Structures" (unpublished paper, School of Management, University of Bath).

## CHAPTER II

### THE RITUAL FRAME OF ERVING GOFFMAN

#### Introduction

The ritual frame of interaction, which I call "The Stalking-Ground", is used constantly by Erving Goffman throughout his whole oeuvre, but it is only one of several different, merged frames with which he describes and interprets the rules of face-to-face interaction, and nowhere is it set forth in its entirety. It is first mentioned in Goffman's Ph D thesis on page 103, when Goffman casually observes that in interaction a person may "come to be seen" as a sacred object. On the next page, below further exposition of what Goffman here, for the first time, calls a "ritual model", a footnote explains that this "general view" is based on a section of Emile Durkheim's The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (Goffman, 1953). Then, three years later, in "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor" (Goffman, 1972) (his fullest analysis of the ritual frame) he again references the same book by Durkheim, this time specifically citing the chapter on the soul, and, at the beginning of his paper, he says that he wants "to explore some of the senses in which the person in our urban secular world is allotted a kind of sacredness that is displayed and confirmed by our symbolic acts."

What I produce here, as the substance of this chapter, is an extraction from Goffman's oeuvre of almost every "ritual"

statement he has made on the subject of human interplay. This is possible because the ritual frame is described as late as 1976 ("Replies and Responses") no differently than in 1953 (the Ph D); a collage of quotations can be organised to display a remarkable internal coherence. Although I actively interpret the ritual frame - by ordering it in the way I think best exhibits it - I keep my linking narrative to a minimum, so that what hitherto has been scattered and without form becomes explicit, as nearly as possible in Goffman's own words. (But one must not imagine that Goffman would want to define his ritual frame or to define it like this.)

I have isolated Goffman's ritual frame to show how impressive it is (more so, I think, than the celebrated dramaturgical frame). Also it seems to me to be the most serious part of Goffman's sociology, as well as the least respected. So I risk thoroughly biasing Goffman's implicit ritual model in order to manifest its arresting power and its subtlety. This I think is worth doing in its own right, but the frame as I present it is, in addition, the background of and starting point for my thesis.

I should justify my selection and arrangement of quotations, so I shall do this by explaining how it came about. I picked every seemingly pertinent comment on ritual life from Goffman's oeuvre and wrote each one on a separate index card. Then I spent a long time arranging and rearranging the order of the cards, until they fell into the groups as they are below. The order they come in is therefore intuitively arrived at and also is the one that - at the time of writing - seems the very best to me for the purpose of demonstrating the ritual frame.

## The Ritual Frame of Erving Goffman<sup>1</sup>

### Ritual and Interaction

*These remarks show Goffman's unhappiness with the connotations of the word "ritual" and this signals his new uses for it, which are here indicated in their full scope.*

The adjectives "ceremonious", "polite", and "expressive" less suitably describe interactional conduct in which "the actor portrays his relation to objects of value in their own right" than does "ritual", though this itself has irrelevant connotations of "other-worldliness and automacity" (RR 266n). Ritual acts are those through which a person "shows he is worthy of respect or how worthy he feels others are of it," and a ritual order of expressions sustains his face, that "sacred thing" (E 19). People act not merely by strategically taking into consideration one another's probable responses but also by engaging in mutual worship. Conduct, "when the idol we are ritually careful of is also ritually careful of us," though partly influenced by thoughts of likely responses, is guided by "religious tenets and norms" (CC 173). "Even more than being a game of informational management, conversational interaction is a problem in ritual management" (CC 103). "The ritual frame provides a question that can be asked of anything occurring during talk and a way of accounting for what does occur" (RR 267).

### Rituals

*The overly calculating theories of Mead and Weber push Goffman to the idea of "considerateness" which in turn pushes him to a view of persons as sacred. So, little behaviours like greetings can be re-interpreted as celebrating big issues, such as the nature of humanness. The very morality of interaction can now be seen as stemming from the ritualness of human beings, and,*



*further, a ritual model of interaction can explain interaction, especially as the model itself mimics shared conduct ideals.*

The ritual model has been "poorly tested", perhaps because Mead and Weber tend to imply that when people take each other's actions into consideration they do so instrumentally. But, if considerateness rather than calculation is meant by "consideration", it can be appreciated that people "taking into consideration" must also "give consideration" (CC 103). The object of greatest consideration is, of course, a god, before whom rites are performed "as frequently and compulsively as the sacred value of the object is great," yet, in so far as people too are regarded as sacred, piety governs conduct (CC 104):

.... in the idol's immediate presence we act with ritual care, appreciating that pious actions may favourably dispose the idol toward us and that impious actions may anger the idol and cause it to perform angry actions against us.

(CC 104)

Usually, however, only persons of the highest office are as sacred as idols, and behaviour though often ceremonial is not nearly so often ceremonious: "An idol is to a person as a rite is to etiquette" (CC 104). A pious display, furthermore, may conceal other terms of an interaction, for "how a relationship is portrayed through ritual can provide an imbalanced, even distorted view of the relationship itself" (GA 3).

Acts such as salutations, invitations, compliments, and minor services, "through which the individual makes specific attestations to recipients concerning how he regards them and how he will treat them in the on-coming interaction," are "presentation rituals" (IR 71) while "avoidance rituals" like the use of formal address instead of first names, prevent violations of what Simmel

called the "ideal sphere" of a person (IR 62). These rituals must look spontaneous. In total institutions, where they are coerced, staff recipients protect themselves from the knowledge that they do not win "natural" respect by defining inmates as "not-fully-adults" or by rationalizing that it is the office and not the man who is saluted (A 107).<sup>2</sup> Deference patterns in general are "partly a matter of changing fashion" (IR 65) and ritual concerns "are patently dependent on cultural definition and can be expected to vary quite markedly from society to society" (RR 267).

"Ritually neutral" persons, not being able to give or take offence, are neither sacred nor profane. Thus children, so far as they are neutral, are not obliged to conduct themselves in a socially responsible way (CC 186). And, like children, non-persons (adults in a segmental society) have little sanctity, though this may not be thought deplorable (for example, maids in Dixon<sup>3</sup> had to listen to untactful things that were said in front of them to convey that maids' feelings need not be taken into consideration (CC 227-8)). The moral right to be valued has force to the degree that claimed social characteristics are real; this countervails the rule that claims "as to what is" are for other people "what they ought to see as the 'is'" (PS 24). Should unsuitable valuations be conveyed, a person "is obliged to try to cope ... by spontaneously treating them as if they had not occurred, or by integrating them as best he can into the official definition of the situation, or by merely sustaining tension without departing physically from the situation" (E 47). This is "the morality of interaction", which is always open to exploitation by the introduction of references and acts a victim can manage only with difficulty (E 47). "A promise to take ritual care of .... face is built into the very structure of talk" (IR 40), and a person's orientation to

face, especially his own, "is the point of leverage that the ritual order has in regard to him" (IR 40). Not the individual, then, but society, in its social encounters, just to remain what it is, needs "self-regulating participants," who are mobilised through ritual. To perform their rituals persons need "to be perceptive, to have feelings attached to self and a self expressed through face, to have pride, honor, and dignity, to have considerateness, to have tact and a certain amount of poise." This extremely prescribed behaviour, which is necessary for the competent interacting that keeps society going, is repeatedly referred to as "universal human nature" (IR 44).

Within a ritual model of interaction:

1. An act is taken to carry implications regarding the character of the actor and his evaluation of his listeners, as well as reflecting on the relationship between him and them.
2. Potentially offensive acts can be remedied by the actor through accounts and apologies, but this remedial work must appear to be accepted as sufficient by the potentially offended party before the work can properly be terminated.
3. Offended parties are generally obliged to induce a remedy if none is forthcoming or in some other way show that an unacceptable state of affairs has been created, else, in addition to what has been conveyed about them, they can be seen as submissive regarding others' lapses in maintaining the ritual code.

(RR 269)

In addition, a ritual version of social reality allows an act to be seen as "a passing exhortative guide to perception" (GA 3), using those same social appearances an advertiser uses to dramatise his product. Intention displays, microecological mappings of social structure, approved typifications, and gestural externalisations (of what can be taken to be inner responses) clarify otherwise opaque social situations (GA 27).

"Whether we pose for a picture or execute an actual ritual action, what we are presenting is a commercial, an ideal representation under the auspices of its characterizing the way things really are" (GA 84). In real life, for instance, a man lighting a woman's cigarette proposes to himself, to the woman, and to any onlookers that "females are worthy objects, physically limited in some way, and that they should be helped out in all their transactions" (GA 84). Similarly, in Dixon, salutations "seem to confirm and symbolize the right of all islanders to have certain kinds of access to all other islanders" and "these salutations provide an opportunity of acknowledging allegiance to the island and to the commoners, in general, who live on it" (CC 183).

### Some Rules of Interplay

*Using his ritual conceptions, Goffman is able to interpret very many interactional regularities, including whole etiquette systems and even, lately (in "Response Cries"), the forms of solitary but public exclamations.*

The principal guide for conduct in interplay is "an image of what might and might not give offence to another" (CC 336). A person will know "how to behave" by "repeatedly and automatically asking himself the question, 'If I do or do not act in this way, will I or others lose face?'" (IR 36). He will not, for example, break the "strong taboo" against withdrawing attention, since interplay cannot survive the disinterest of its participants (CC 145). He will not "improperly" change a topic too abruptly, for that would convey too little interest had been taken in the previous

topic (CC 145). Happening unseen into situations where he might overhear remarks to his detriment, he "ought to warn them (the overheard) in some way by means of a tactful cue" (CC 94n) lest they are allowed to unwittingly give offence. However, self profanations, such as those of modesty, do not injure a person "qua object of ultimate worth" unless he is forced to treat himself this way against his will, when he will be seriously threatened. "The licence to accept mistreatment at his own hands that he does not have the right to accept from others" ensures it is not abused (IR 32), though, in mental hospitals, "the kind of information that the patient is likely to try to hide" is systematically circulated and "used daily to puncture his claims" (A 148). Sanctions of moral disapproval in conversational order, unlike those of other social orders, are expressed immediately in ways that do not destroy the order they are designed to maintain (CC 34).

Rules are effective (in so far as they are) because those to whom they apply believe them to be right and come to conceive of themselves both in terms of who and what it is that compliance allows them to be and in terms of what deviation implies they have become. The sanctioning system associated with a rule is effective (in so far as it is) because it proclaims the individual's success or failure at realising what he and others feel he should be, and, more abstractly, proclaims the individual's compliance with or deviation from rules in general.

(RP 127)

Thus encounters are much more than arbitrary periods during which messages are exchanged. They are "a coming together that ritually regularizes the risks and opportunities face-to-face talk provides, enforcing the standards of modesty regarding self and considerateness for others generally enjoined in the community" (RR 268). (By identifying the ritual in social situations it

becomes possible "to think in terms of general rules for the management of conversational interplay" (RR 268).)

Seemingly trivial interchanges like greetings and farewells "are expressive of the conceptions people have of one another" (and so by being performed in a "snide or fawning fashion" can express these quite subtly)(CC 66). The right to enter interplay or to bring another into interplay is likewise hedged about by ritual concerns, and is only given "to the degree that ... action cannot be construed as an effort to reduce social distance or improperly acquire strategic information"(CC 159). Persons, having once been "introduced", must thereafter engage in interplay with each other or else offend, and, similarly, a partygoer does not have the right to not be spoken to by other partygoers. These arrangements show a ritual respect in the former case for the introducer and in the latter for the host (CC 160). Talk itself must have a ritual warrant for "silence, after all, is very often the deference we owe in a social situation to others present," and "without such enjoined modesty, there could be no public life, but only a babble of childish adults pulling at one another's sleeves for attention. The mother to whom we would be saying 'Look, no hands' could not reply, for she would be saying, 'Look, no hands' to someone else" (RC 813).

Rules of conduct are guides for action recommended because it is suitable and just, not because it is "pleasant, cheap or effective" (IR 48). These rules are obligations and expectations that ensure the sort of accommodative consideration within interplay, where persons are "opened up" to one another, that is likely to be absent between its same participants when no longer face-to-face (CC 158). Here "territorial preserves" may play a dual ritual role, with "comings-into-touch" used as a means of

establishing regard or avoided "as a means of maintaining respect" (RP 87). Etiquette is the name of the general code governing these ceremonial rules and expressions. The forms of etiquette and courtesy are "model interchanges" that recognize people as sacred objects in an environment of potential offence (CC 191). In a culture that values high standards of mutual concern, elaborate politeness, then, may as easily evince concealed hostility as mutual regard (CC 181n), while courtesies performed at high cost are gallantries, showing a respect for ceremonial order over and above personal welfare (IR 200). But even the blurting of a response cry like "Ouch!" is "a claim of sorts upon the attention of everyone in the social situation - a claim that our inner concerns be theirs, too" (RC 814), yet at all times the gestures "which carry an actor to a recipient must also signify that things will not be carried too far" (IR 76).

### Manner and Appearance

*Goffman is very precise about appropriate levels of involvement in interaction, even to specifying how much seeming "unthinkingness" there should be on certain occasions. He shows how the involvement norms that derive from ritual concerns facilitate orderly communication, as do the ritually appropriate appearances of decorum, manner, front, demeanour, deference, body gloss, and clothing. His concentration on the importance of appearances inevitably leads him to raise the question of how they are trusted.*

A person in interplay is ruled by involvement norms of two opposing kinds. Inhibitory norms limit the feelings he may express and keep him from inappropriately involving himself in competing events, while a second set of norms obliges him to be "sincere and unaffected in an expressive way" as well as to show some real feelings. "These two sets of norms were found to be

operative wherever, whenever, and with whomsoever spoken communication occurred on the island" (CC 350).

A social situation therefore can be defined as "that entity neatly matching the area within which the individual's regulation of involvement is perceptible" (BP 194). Conduct therein obeys the norms of involvement that apply to intensity of involvement, distribution of involvement between main and side activities, and the tendency of involvement to bring an individual into engagements. In a multi-person situation, further rules against becoming externally preoccupied or, alternatively, over-involved with oneself (or with just one other person) oblige a person to demonstrate his "involvement in a situation through the modulation of his involvements within the situation" (BP 196); however, involvement levels do vary from interplay to interplay, as they do between roles in any one interplay (CC 247). Lacking its requisite human involvements "the minute social system that is brought into being with each encounter will be disorganized, and the participants will feel unrulled, unreal, and anomic." Indeed, a person habitually "thrown out of step with the sociable moment" can become "alienated from things that take much more of his time" (IR 135).

Interaction is most successful when persons scale down their own expressions and scale up the interest they show in those they are with. This suppression of self in favour of "other" is "the bridge that people build to one another, allowing them to meet for a moment of talk in a communion of reciprocally sustained involvement. It is this spark, not the more obvious kinds of love, that lights up the world" (IR 116-7). Involvement, however, ceases to be involvement the moment it is seen as premeditated: "The requirement that persons be impulsively



involved in interplay in which they participate is borne out by a very significant rule, namely that interplay must not be staged or worked out beforehand" (CC 249). All persons demand "that when an individual speaks, his bodily expression will provide easy access to all the information needed in order to determine how much self-belief and resolve lie behind his statements. Differently put, we demand of an individual that he not be too good at acting" (SI 44). "It would seem that the unthinking impulsive aspect of interaction is not a residual category that can be appended as a qualification to a rational model of communication; the spontaneous unthinking aspect of interaction is a crucial element of interaction" (CC 242). "Most actions that are guided by rules of conduct are performed unthinkingly" (IR 49).

Ritual facilitates communication. By conducting themselves with ritual care in regard to interruptions, leavetakings, inattentions, and the like (signs well designed "for expressing the judgements that participants make of one another") people cannot help but act so that messages "flow in an orderly fashion" (CC 354-5). "The satisfaction of ritual constraints safeguards not only feelings but communication, too" (RR 267). Participants "motivated to preserve everyone's face .... end up acting so as to preserve an orderly communication" (RR 267). Moreover, unlike simple grammars, ritual constraints "open up the possibility of corrective action as part of these very constraints" (RR 269). Thus any rational model of communication reciprocates perfectly with the ritual model.

But interaction easily goes awry. If an "untoward event" occurs in a public place persons must establish a "viable alignment" by choosing from "the corpus of quick displays" that "by and large [are] a given of the culture" (RP 225). There is a

"deterministic" need "to take some kind of stand to the deficiency in question" (RP 225). In Dixon, islanders acted under "conditions of great expressive responsibility" but everywhere "in our society" people are "trained to employ a somewhat common idiom of posture, position, and glances, wordlessly choreographing [themselves] relative to others in social situations with the effect that interpretability of scenes is possible" (GA 21). Two aspects of this kind of "personal front" are decorum and manner: "Decorous behaviour may take the form of showing respect for the region and setting one finds oneself in" while "the part of personal front.... called 'manner' will be important in regard to politeness" (and politeness of course is only expressed in interaction) (PS 111). "Performers can stop giving expressions but cannot stop giving them off" (PS 111), and what is given off is demeanour: "That element of the individual's ceremonial behaviour, typically conveyed through deportment, dress, and bearing, which serves to express to those in his immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable or undesirable qualities" (IR 77). Deportment and bearing in their turn constitute at least three types of "body gloss": orientation, circumspection, and overplay (RP 162-9). When these are used as "corrections for infractions" of a "multitude of minor territories of the self" they are "the indignity of overacted gesticulation" (RP 171). However, a gloss such as the "delinquency strut" may be adopted to convey both a challenge to authority and the fact that the challenge has not been faced up to (IR 252). "The gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps the fullest things of all" (IR 33). "An unguarded glance, a momentary change of voice, an ecological position taken or not taken, can drench a talk in judgemental significance" (IR 33). In any situation a person is obliged "by sustaining a publicly oriented composition

of his face" to show that he is "in play", ready for interaction (BP 193-4) within which he must give frequent "takes" (CC 168) since attention signs "are a minor but significant communication courtesy" (CC 199). Composure is valued for itself because all tasks performed in social occasions demand it. (Discomposure in a person breaks rules protecting the selves of his coparticipants, who have no choice, if this happens, but to forbear (CC 38).)

"Undirected communication" like demeanour and appearance conveys less a specific message than overall conceptions concerning the sender and his others, and about these "participants have strong feelings" (CC 117). Clothing too is a kind of continuous transmission, so incorrect attire can affront (CC 120), but since demeanour indexes a person's respect for the region of a social occasion and its participants (CC 117), it can also be established by acts "through which [a person] gives or withholds deference" (IR 81).

Revealed here is a "fundamental social dialectic." To behave properly, people need to know the facts of a situation, but must rely on appearances. The less sure they are of the facts the more they must look to the very appearances that may have encouraged their uncertainty. A "gentleman" will seek to influence others' treatment of himself by acting straightforwardly to confirm the impressions he gives. "Merchants or morality", on the other hand, under "the very obligation and profitability of appearing in a steady light, of being a socialized character," will amorally perform their moral appearances (PS 241-4). So it is that a person "may be led to seek the safety of solitude rather than the danger of social encounters" (IR 39), or else put his trust in appearances that he knows can always be untrustworthy.

## Trust

*Trust is necessary, Goffman has to assert, else society would regress into multiplying paranoia, but it is broken for convenience and given, often enough, on the understanding that it will not be taken at face value.*

Inasmuch as words are regarded as expressive they are taken seriously, and generally the social utility of not becoming known as a liar prompts people to say what they mean. Because "we cannot build another into our plans unless we can rely on him to give his word and keep it" the virtue of honesty that is demanded "is made out of organizational necessity" (SI 128,130). In any situation, signs of trust must be conveyed since "only when these signs are received may the individual feel secure enough to give himself up to the merely-situated aspects of his involvements" (BP 197). In all relationships "as evidence of trust and mutual commitment" persons are obliged "to exchange an appropriate amount of intimate facts about self" (S 108). However, the trust of a prepatient passing down his "betrayal funnel" into a mental hospital is systematically abused. At each interactional step in his betrayal, consideration is shown to him as if he had finally reached bottom, but only to win his reciprocated orderly behaviour (A 130-1). This kind of cynical consideration is akin to the "phantom acceptance" normals give to a stigmatized person, and the worst of it is that this is the best the stigmatized person can hope for, because "the degree to which normals accept the stigmatized individual" is directly related to "his acting with full spontaneity and naturalness as if the conditional acceptance of him, which he is careful not to overreach, is full acceptance" (S 147). But phantom acceptance is a condition of all relationships: "Any mutual adjustment and mutual approval between two individuals

can be fundamentally embarrassed if one of the partners accepts in full the offer that the other appears to make; every 'positive' relationship is conducted under implied promises of consideration and aid such that the relationship would be injured were the credits actually drawn on" (S 147). Trust, therefore, is a kind of expediency that must not look as knowing as it is.

### Place

*Place is a wider term than status, and Goffman uses it a lot, meaning by it, I think, the total possible social environment of a person. He also seems to define place as the amount of ritual respect a person should know that he merits. Goffman is often at his most eloquent when discussing the fate of people who do not keep their place, and he is quite clear that the social improprieties of not knowing one's place arouse deep negative emotions that almost seem designed to keep everyone in their correct social places.*

People are trusted to know their places, and it is his particular place that gives a person his particular face. Thus "charm and colorful little informalities" belong not so much to the self of a high-ranking person as to his office, because social distance between two people is of different extent "depending from whose place one starts" (E 114). The situation of western women illustrates this. As depicted in advertisements, their place is on beds and floors, behind objects, and always below men. They are shown snuggling and nuzzling, averting gaze, and staring at objects while hanging on to men. Not infrequently they are being spoonfed and, much more than men, they smile and clown or stand with head or body canted and knees bent. When they are not ritualistically touching their own bodies or objects (sometimes with their faces) they may be shown (in holiday scenes especially) being mock-assaulted by husbands; and in family groups, while their

sons struggle to emulate father, they passively descend to the level of the daughters (GA 28-83). All behaviour confirms or disconfirms that a person "knows and keeps his place" (RP 399) and strong confirmation comes through displays of proper deference, deference being the "symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed to a recipient of this recipient" (IR 56). Therefore, interaction between two persons is never so simply symmetrical as a Meadian mutual taking into account of other's attitude, for the deference image given is not identical to the demeanour image taken, and each person comprises both images (IR 84). Rather than strategic calculation, what occurs when persons meet is "joint ceremonial labor" with demeanour showing interaction status and deference pointing out of the interaction to societal status (IR 83). (Deference, of course, is as often shown by equal to equal and subordinate to subordinate as by subordinate to superordinate (IR 58-60).) The "status bloodbath" of a party, where contamination and sacralization are the order of the day, succeeds so long as the requisite spontaneous involvement is not killed by officially irrelevant attributes intruding and thereby destroying the identities on which sociability is organized. People in gatherings can become "uncomfortable" when they have "nothing in common" (in this case their statuses are so far apart that the attention "status" draws to itself reduces official involvements to zero) and can become "bored" when those present are "the same old people" (in this case they are too similar to enable the worship and sacrilege that would generate involvement) (E 71). Parties can be left, but, locked in a ward of a mental hospital, a patient may find that the only way he can demonstrate to himself "that he is not to be judged by his current setting, nor is subjugated or contaminated by it" is by projecting

a crazy self (knowing he is not that crazy) (BP 225). For most people the rituals of avoidance and presentation "provide a continuous symbolic tracing of the extent to which the recipient's ego has not been bounded and barricaded in regard to others" (IR 71) but in a tough punishment ward the inmate with very little more to lose might create his very own self through ritual insubordination, conveyed by a stance that "combines stiffness, dignity, and coolness in a particular mixture.... and expresses that one is entirely one's own man." Some patients in these wards "not going out of their way to make trouble" manage to convey "unconcern and mild contempt for all levels of the staff, combined with utter self-possession" (A 278-9). Such persons, locked in the worst of social places, yet succeed in putting a staff person in what they see as his place.

Sexual intercourse can be employed by two persons to show each other their places for it too is "part of the ceremonial system, a reciprocal ritual performed to confirm symbolically an exclusive social relationship" (PS 190n). In these sexual rituals proper involvement should be shown since "the engrossing power of such encounters can become a crucial test of the relationship" (E 47). If such involvement is missing, the "subvocal tracking of sexually climactic experience" is a "display available to both sexes" whose sound "can be strategically employed to delineate an ideal development in the marked absence of anything else" (RC 804).

Emotion in encounters may be closely linked to ritual concerns. Thus, when a person is caught acting improperly or catches others doing so, his embarrassment "can be surprisingly deep" (BP 248). Any offender against the conversational order feels shame (CC 36), and when a face is lost, a witness to the event might feel an anguish as deep as the anger that would accompany

his own loss of face (IR 23). Audiences, too, are always in awe of performers. The more awe they feel the more they would feel shame if the performers' secrets were disclosed (PS 76). Feelings are so closely related to ritual concerns that those spontaneously expressed, rather than "consciously designed ones," fit best into ritual interchanges (IR 23). For this reason, shamelessness is a rare state which may only be achieved by unusual persons who choose to no longer project a self: for example, right at the end of their moral careers, some mental patients, having had their old selves destroyed, simply do not seek a new one, and, instead, unconcerned with their own or others' sacred worth, "practise before all groups the amoral arts of shamelessness" (A 155).

### Proprieties

*The proprieties are not rules per se but those creative, even apparently rule-breaking forms of conduct that understand the rules very well. Proprieties issue exclusively from ritual concerns.*

It follows that those who "actively dispute the proprieties" respect a gathering and its encompassing social situation more than those who give it no attention (BP 226). Likewise the "unserious ritual profanation" of joking, which is resorted to when people used to one kind of relationship are thrown into another, indicates respect for the left-behind selves that an absence of joking would not (CC 213). Innuendo, however, is an impropriety that must be overlooked because it implies disagreement, whereas the unseriousness that expresses disagreement signifies underlying agreement. (Communication arrangements such as unserious innuendo give some idea of the possible complexities of interaction (CC 89n).)



Offence may be given by conveying expressive behaviour in a way calculated to look calculated (CC 86, 87) but in the dark of a film-show expressive offences like weeping are permitted because "presumably at these times there is no interaction that can be embarrassed" (CC 288). Joking behaviour, falling short of offensiveness, can often be "seriously necessary to keep the peace" (CC 214n), the joker not being held responsible for his words; but, should his attempt at maintaining an unserious situational definition fail, he will be blamed for a breach of good taste (CC 79). So, rather than make jokes, a person may direct dangerous remarks not to their recipient but to a third party (even an animal or an object) or into the air (CC 159), and many are the unsuspecting high-status persons who in interaction are profaned behind their backs:

....when Mr Allen could come to the pier to check up on the rate of work or to talk to the foreman, a worker located behind Mr Allen's back would sometimes make profanizing gestures. On one occasion, a worker took up an empty bag of lime and whirled it about his head, testing the limits to which derogatory action could be carried on behind the back of the boss without the boss seeing it.

(CC 240)

Nonetheless, there do take place interactions in which a person talks about himself and invites others to talk about him in a way that sacrifices his self-respect; if others join in and also profane themselves, "backstage solidarity" and "team spirit" may be built up. This practice of sharing secrets is common in group therapy (PS 200). Mostly, though, in everyday life, it is necessary to be ready to say pardon at all times, "exorcising possible slights" (CC 191), and there is a duty (which engages honour) to insist on the right to be given the right place "lest

the whole pattern of rules deteriorate" (IR 242). Some unruly persons, daring from their point of view and foolhardy from the point of view of the undaring, will exploit these very considerations in order to stage a "character contest" (the moral game of establishing strong character at the expense of an opponent's ) (IR 240). Or else, "in an unconscious desire to keep amusement and interest in the interplay from lagging" a person might ritually profane himself by sacrificing his own dignity (CC 324-6). But, when bending the rules of interaction, the greatest care must be taken because, sanctions being immediately applied by the offended, "those who break the rules of interaction commit their crimes in jail" (IR 116-7). "The scene of the crime, the halls of judgement, and the place of detention are all housed in the same cubicle; furthermore, the complete cycle of crime, apprehension, trial, punishment, and return to society can run its course in two gestures and a glance" (RP 137). But, in spite of this, persons can create "unauthorized" distance between themselves and their allotted place "through direct insolence that does not meet with immediate correction, or remarks passed half out of hearing of authority, or gestures performed behind the back of authority" (A 276). And when a person dons a particular style of clothing, such as the black shirts in the thirties, he proclaims distance not only from situational life but from civil life (BP 222). Distance may also be expressed by "tight" behaviour in "loose" situations and "loose" behaviour towards those persons and objects who are owed tight behaviour. (BP 198-216, 229). Such distancing can strike "at the syntax of conduct, deranging the usual agreement between posture and place, between expression and position" (RP 424). In fact, "the most disruptive thing a person can do is fail to keep a place that others feel can't be changed for him" (RP 449). Many mental patients do

just that, and once in hospital duly find themselves "graded according to the degree to which they violate ceremonial rules of social intercourse" (IR 92). In a mental hospital persons may "collapse as units of minimal ceremonial substance and .... learn that what had been taken for granted as ultimate entities are really held together by rules that can be broken with some kind of impunity" (IR 94). (Knowledge of this kind is for both staff and inmates "undesired".) So, if a person does not express a definition of himself that his familiars can confirm through their regard of him, his effect is:

..... to block and trip up and threaten them in almost every movement that they make. The selves that had been the reciprocals of his are undermined. And that which should not have been able to change - the character of a loved one lived with - appears to be changing fundamentally and for the worse before their eyes. In ceasing to know the sick person, they can even cease to be sure of their way of knowing. A deep bewilderment results. Confirmations that everything is predictable and as it should be cease to flow from his presentations. The question as to what it is that is going on is not readily answered at every turn but must be constantly ferreted out anew. And life is said to become like a bad dream - for there is no place in possible realities for what is occurring. (RP 424)

### Essential Human Nature

*Goffman makes no bones about his feeling that people are only their appearances, and that these are more often boring mimeographs than priceless first editions. He has said (in his introduction to Interaction Ritual) that his psychology is a deliberately minimal one to facilitate his sociology. But I do not think he means this. Often his sweeping away of psychological man is powerfully rhetorical. No psychologist that I know of has yet noticed that if Goffman is right the discipline of psychology is founded on illusions.*

If, then, there are no such things as "relationships,

feelings, attitudes, and the like" and if "various acts and postures" do not provide evidence of them, "the position can be taken that in the main what exists are doctrines regarding expression, gestural equipment for providing displays, and stable motives for encouraging certain imputations" (FA 462). Similarly, "natural expressions" of gender are portraits that "naturally express" only the capacity and inclination a person has to portray a certain version of himself. What is really essential to human nature is "the competency to produce these portraits, and interpret those produced by others" (GA 7).

The commonsense assumption that emotional expression is a reliable index to the state of mind of the actor appears to be partly valid, but perhaps not for the reasons commonsense would supply. In this study it is assumed that the emotional expression practised by the members of a particular group is determined by the moral rules recognized in the group regarding social interaction. The member must not only learn when and how to express his emotions, but is morally obliged to express them in this approved way. Further, the member is obliged to obey the rules of expression once learned, in a sufficiently automatic and unselfconscious way so that observers will in fact be partly justified in their assumptions that the emotion conveyed to them is a dependable index of the actor's emotional state. It is suggested here that emotional expression is a reliable index because persons have been taught to act in such a way as to confirm the fiction that emotional response is an unguarded instinctive response to the situation.

(CC 59-60)

Therefore, since "we are socialized to confirm our own hypotheses about our natures," (GA 2) "universal human nature is not a very human thing" (IR 44), and a person is a construct built out of externally imposed rules. The particular set of these rules that "transforms him into a human being derives from requirements established in the ritual organization of social encounters" (IR 44). So, even in the closest relationship, the "indication that each party provides the other that nothing whatsoever could

break them apart is itself the substance, not the shadow" (FA 463). By the same logic, a person among strangers in public places "must come to be for himself .... someone whose appearances are ones his others can see as normal. His show of being safely disattendable is deeply him; he has no self that is deeper" (RP 328). It is through deference and demeanour that "the world tends to be bathed in better images than anyone deserves," because within interactions all persons offer the precise excess of deferential indulgence good demeanour consists in declining (IR 83). In the fields of Dixon, too, workers took frequent breaks which "seemed to express the fact that they were not merely animals engaged in routine labour all day long but were persons, capable and desirous of conducting social interaction with other persons" (CC 190). Deference cannot be self-served; therefore, people who would achieve humanness are tied together. "If the individual could give himself the deference he desired there might be a tendency for society to disintegrate into islands inhabited by solitary cultish men, each in continuous worship at his own shrine" (IR 58). In mental hospitals these ideas seem to be well understood. For example, assignment to a ward expresses a person's "general level of social functioning". "Given the fact that the worst ward levels provide a round of life that inpatients with organic brain damage can easily manage, and that these quite limited human beings are present to prove it, one can appreciate some of the mirroring effects of the hospital" (A 139). Here in a hospital a person can learn that by being moved from ward to ward his self in a very short space of time can be built and lost and built again:

The setting ... seems to engender a kind of cosmopolitan sophistication, a kind of civic apathy. In this unserious yet oddly exaggerated moral context, building up a self or having it destroyed becomes something of a shameless game, and learning to view the process as a game seems to make for some demoralization, the game being such a fundamental one. In the hospital, then, the inmate can learn that the self is not a fortress, but rather a small open city; he can become weary of having to show pleasure when held by troops of his own, and weary of having to show displeasure when held by the enemy. Once he learns what it is like to be defined by society as not having a viable self, this threatening definition - the threat that helps attach people to the self society accords them - is weakened. The patient seems to gain a new plateau when he learns that he can survive while acting in a way that society sees as destructive of him.

(A 151)

So the self arises not merely within interaction "but also out of the social arrangements that are evolved in an organization for its members" (A 138).

"Character", though, is not the same as self. It comprises, besides the "primary properties" of ability, "maintenance properties" that have a person "standing correct and steady in the face of sudden pressures" (IR 214-239). Weak character is revealed by incorrect behaviour during the stress of fatefulness in "action" (action being problematical and consequential activity undergone for its own sake). Possibly because of the high costs for individuals and for society of an incessant establishing of character among its members, one significant expression of character "tends to be taken as an adequate basis for judgement". (Various blends of courage, gameness, integrity, and self-discipline will be expressed). Character has a dual nature. It refers not only to what is characteristic of a person, ("essential and unchanging") but also "to attributes that can be generated and destroyed through fateful moments" (IR 238).

Actually it is a "fundamental illusion". Persons ever encounter possibilities that seem to encourage them to renew their efforts at establishing character, and by so doing only succeed in sustaining society's routines: "We are allowed to think there is something to be won in the moments that we face so that society can face moments and defeat them" (IR 239).

What then of self change? In total institutions successive abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations cause "progressive changes ... in the beliefs that he [the inmate] has concerning himself and significant others" (A 24). These changes constitute a "moral career" that can lead to a fully institutionalised self:

It is .... a tribute to the power of social forces that the uniform status of mental patient cannot only assure an aggregate of persons a common fate and eventually, because of this, a common character, but that this social reworking can be done upon what is perhaps the most obstinate diversity of human materials that can be brought together by society.

(A 121)

But the moment in interactions when a person destroys himself by "flooding out" is also socially determined: "The individual's breaking point is that of the group to whose affective standards he adheres" (IR 103).

Within organizations, social arrangements imply a conception of a person not only as a member but as a human being and therefore an organization can be viewed "as a place for generating assumptions about identity" (A 164, 170). Because the activities prescribed within an organization prescribe a world, "to dodge a prescription can be to dodge an identity" (A 170). A person will always hold himself off "from fully embracing all the self-implications of his affiliations, allowing some of his disaffection to be seen, even

while fulfilling his major obligations" (A 161). Frequently, though, it might be something other than disaffection that is shown; in interaction a formal role might be put in its place by behaviour that implies a larger or different self:

In performing a role, then, the individual is likely to take minor liberties, ducking out for a moment to stretch or apologize. These fleeting derelictions are but shadows of acts, very easily unseen; certainly sociology has managed for long to ignore them. That a stage performer must disavow himself of these lapses when presenting a character (except when they are scripted) should quicken our interest in them and lead one to appreciate more clearly that although the social world is built up out of roles sustained by persons, these persons have, and are seen to have a right to have, a wider being than any current role allows. These very small acts celebrate very large issues.

(FA 544)

..... if an individual is to show that he is a "nice guy" or, by contrast, one much less nice than a human being need be, then it is through his using or not using role distance that this is to be done. It is right here, in manifestations of role distance, that the individual's personal style is to be found.

(E 134)

But the self that a person "shows through" his "official guise" is as prescribed by culture as is the official guise (FA 573-4). Every person falls short of the ideal images provided by his culture, and as often as he tries to show, in and around his roles, that he embodies these he is "likely to find himself being apologetic or aggressive concerning known about aspects of himself he knows are probably seen as undesirable" (S 153). "More than to any family or club, more than to any class or sex, more than to any nation, the individual belongs to gatherings, and he had best show that he is a member in good standing" (BP 248).



## Social Order

*Here are the remarks by which Goffman builds up the structure of society from a basically ritual structure of interaction. Society is what we tell one another it is, and our acting as if it is as we are told it is makes it so.*

Social order is defined as "the consequence of any set of moral norms that regulates the way in which persons pursue objectives" (BP 8), and "the rules of conduct which bind the actor and recipient together are the bindings of society"(IR 90). Since acts guided purely by these rules are infrequent and take time to conclude themselves, opportunities to affirm moral order are sought in other acts that "last but a brief moment" and "involve no substantive outlay" and "can be performed in every social interaction" (IR 91). Typical small acts are "remedial rituals" ("Excuse me" and "Think nothing of it") that are a "constant feature of public life" and in these rituals is expressed the "official moral ideology" of the culture: "We must see that the historical centre [moral ideology] and the contemporary periphery are linked more closely than any one these days seems to want to credit" (RP 222). Everybody feels a need to supply remarks or gestures that repair "the discrepancy another might see between their practice and their values" (RP 222). A person's performance "will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society" (PS 45). And, because every kind of transaction is "opened and closed by ritual", social life is infused with a "constant checking back to, and reminder of, a small number of central beliefs about the rights and character of persons" (RP 172). In a mental hospital, more than anywhere else, probably because of its reflection on his status, the patient will concoct

a "sad tale" - a lamentation, and also an apologia for his presence in the setting - which "brings him into appropriate alignment with the basic values of his society" (A 139). The condemned man, too, on his way to death will want to demonstrate good character by "smoothing" the social situation, comporting himself with good grace in "the final and awful socialized act" (IR 232). It is, then, to the "flimsy rules" that manage engrossment, not to the unshaking character of the external world, that we owe our unshaking sense of realities" (E 72). So compelling are these rules that even on occasions of extreme deprivation "it is thought praiseworthy to joke about the situation and demonstrate that one still has a self free for interaction (CC 283).

Rules as strong as these point to a structural explanation for even so deconstructing an event as loss of face in embarrassment displays. A person, placed in a social situation in which to be the self it demands would destroy the self that brought him to it, can keep open his options to be both selves at different times in the future by ceasing entirely to be a viable self (IR 111). (Thus society suffers no loss of roles even though the individual has his face temporarily wiped off his existence.)

No escape from society is possible. In the most intimate interactions "we will find that the finger tips of society have reached bluntly into the contact," for even at the centre of a category like "wife" the husband will meet "a full array of socially standardized anticipations" so that "it is scandalous to speak of marriage as a particularistic relationship" (S 70). Even the formal signing of a contract implies a host of non-contractual but societal assumptions about the signer: that he, for example, thinks contracts are legal, has legal competence and good faith, and understands

unstated limits of trust (A 159). Even those who merely join an organization take on a "conception of a person not only as a member but as a human being" (A 164), and an organization "involves a discipline of being - an obligation to be of a given character and to dwell in a given world" (A 171).

Nevertheless, social life has more affinities to worlds of make-believe than to facts. The scenes of advertisements, for example, though rare in life "may yet be commonly part of the ideals and fantasies of many actual people" (GA 22). Everyday life "often seems to be a laminated adumbration" of folk tales, characters in novels, advertisements, myths, movie stars and their roles, the Bible, and so forth:

Life may not be an imitation of art, but ordinary conduct, in a sense, is an imitation of the proprieties, a gesture at the exemplary forms, and the primal realization of these ideals belongs more to make-believe than reality.

(FA 562)

Persons, telling their tales, since they "do not have a cast of trained actors at their disposal or much time to polish a script," fail to be as lifelike in interactions as interactions are on stage (FA 559). A machine such as television is quite natural to people because it does what they do (much worse ) in their own interactions: "There is one thing that is similar to the warm hours we now spend wrapped in television. It is the time we are prepared to spend recounting our own experience or waiting an imminent turn to do so. True, we seem to have foregone some of this personal activity in favour of the work of professionals. But what we have given up thereby is not the world but a more traditional way of incorporating its incorporation of us" (FA 550).

The "excitement without cost" that comes of identifying with TV characters passing through a play of events that can be fully witnessed, now performing dangerous tasks, now engaging in character contests, now involved in serious action (IR 262-3), is what was hitherto sought and found in live interactions, that is, dramatized life, not the drama of life, though that in its turn tends to be lived with an eye to its future dramatic rendering:

They develop a corpus of cautionary tales, games, riddles, experiments, newsy stories, and other scenarios which elegantly confirm a frame-relevant view of the workings of the world ... and the human nature that fits with this view of viewing does so in part because its possessors have learned to comport themselves so as to render this analysis true of them. Indeed, in countless ways and ceaselessly, social life takes up and freezes into itself the understandings we have of it.

(FA 563)

Rather than conclude this chapter with a summary, I have created an autonomous and expanded version of what such a summary should be and set it apart as a chapter on its own, which now follows.

#### Notes

1. The following abbreviations are used:

- CC Communication Conduct in an Island Community (1953)
- PS The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1956)
- A Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (1961)
- E Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction (1961)

S Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity (1963)  
 BP Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings (1963)  
 IR Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour (1967)  
 SI Strategic Interaction (1969)  
 RP Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order (1971)  
 FA Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience (1974)  
 GA Gender Advertisements (1976)  
 RR "Replies and Responses" (1976)  
 RC "Response Cries" (1978)

The dates are those of first publication, and so do not necessarily correspond to the dates in my bibliography.

2. Along with works by Szasz, Laing, and others, Asylums, in having had an ameliorative influence on the phenomena it reported, has to some extent gone out of date.
3. "Dixon" is Goffman's pseudonym for the settlement where he researched his Ph D.

## CHAPTER III

### THE STALKING GROUND

This chapter is a statement of my theoretical starting points, almost all of which are taken from Erving Goffman's ritual frame. Through this statement the reader can see my "world view" as this exists at the outset of the thesis. Thus, the sense the chapter makes in terms of my whole narrative, is that of a background or sociological ambience, which is the context for my concerns in ensuing chapters.

General statement: Society has need of moral people who unthinkingly employ a ritual code to regulate the way they treat one another in interactions. People's estimation of themselves as sacred leads to a morality in which even the feigning of presentation, avoidance, and remedy rituals is offensive, and, to maintain this morality, an obligation lies upon the offended to seek the kind of redress that does not further offend. Moral order, then, is affirmed or threatened in every social encounter, but all social life is conducted with more reference to a very few beliefs - dramatized in myth, entertainment, and talk - than to the ritually neutral concerns of purely instrumental exchanges.

Ritual offence: In the company of others a person will try hard not to give offence and if he succeeds will seem like the sort of person - a proper person - compliance with ritual rules allows him to be, for offenders, even if they have broken a ritual rule only once, may be attributed a full-blown deviant self. Behind one another's backs, however, people are the less ritually careful of one another the more they expect to keep their offences secret. But, face-to-face, it only takes the display of a seemingly genuine mutual interest, overriding self presentations, to "light up the world".

It is the duress of having to seem continually what cannot be lived continuously that gives rise to the "merchant of morality" who, especially in his intimate circle, can find himself putting more effort into engineering a front than into carrying out the acts that would give him the front incidentally. Frontwork, however, must not be seen for what it is lest attention be drawn to this demeaning faculty - the faking of humanness - so frontworkers perform anything but an emotionless calculation. There arises, then, a very deep relation between ritual concerns and feelings<sup>1</sup> so much so that a person may hate those who have defiled a proffered self, or, on the other hand, love others who with satisfactory accuracy see him as what, at his most optimistic, he can scarcely be for himself. But a person's sacredness is not entirely his to give to himself. He must receive it from others by risking it in those activities he performs to earn it. (Perhaps a person who does not feel, just by virtue of being a person, that he has ultimate worth cannot be a person. Such people are rare, for even imprisoned criminals, for example, while they may accept that they deserve punishment, have great difficulty in accepting that, as a punishment, they should be "treated like dirt" or that such treatment could be

meted out by punishers claiming to be human. From this it follows that those persons who would offend at will, and not suffer from any consequences, must be in a position to coerce the offended not only into behaving as if they deserve to be offended but also into looking as if they accept the offence as just, otherwise the response to offence, of counter-offence, would threaten the original offender. Staff in total institutions, who very often fail to elicit "genuine" acceptance of their contaminations of inmates, therefore may have to define inmates as subhuman, and, by then treating inmates as subhuman, inevitably receive further cause to so define them.

Self: A person playing a role actually juggles many subsidiary roles, and if he does not will be regarded as a machine rather than a person, yet though no less prescribed than a relinquished official role, his contrapuntal roles may be very distant from it, but, if that person does not nevertheless show requisite ritual respect for his official role, he will be seen as being disruptive of social arrangements, drawing himself closer thereby to the legal sanction of confinement under lock and key.

The fragile nature of selves, their easy reconstitutability, the knowledge that life without a self is not the end of life, are widely denied beliefs. Those who hold them are removed a little from the rest, for whom they may feel the indulgent pity that is the reciprocal of pompous alarm. The unpalatable view, indicated here, of persons as "dramatic effects" rests on the assumption that if there is an essential human nature it is nothing other than the competency to perform what is customarily seen as essential human nature.<sup>2</sup>

Interactive man: Only in interaction can a person receive deference which can never be given in as full measure by himself to himself



(for a person who would take it upon himself to give himself due deference is not a proper person and so could not invite deference, and, then, not being worthy enough to receive deference neither could he, being the same person, give it). Only in interaction can "character" be created or destroyed at a stroke, for it must always be sought at the expense of someone else's and won by a superior showing of courage, gameness, integrity and self-discipline (the "good loser" is a new character won the moment another is lost in contest). And only in the interactions opened to him by virtue of his membership of this or that organisation can a person have a chance to show that he is the "kind of person" such membership defines him as.

A person is the creation of his interactions before he is, for example, a parent, a Marxist, a boss, a male, or a Briton, and yet all these things that he is not, and the degree to which he succeeds or fails at being every one of them, may compare, when he is being sociable with others, to a sort of composite ideal person. Comparing unfavourably, the person in question will want to hide his discreditable self, and the more successful he is at this the more his others' acceptance of him is not of him. Thus his promissory acceptance of their similar phantom normalcy is not payable in full, not only because he himself did not promise it but also because they themselves were not the persons they presented as deeming it. Interaction, then, sometimes may be seen as a stalking ground of culturally approved ideal persons. Therein people go in fear, alternately, of not being taken for the best selves they could be and then of being mistaken for those very same selves.

However terrible his circumstances, a person's first duty to those with whom he is face-to-face is to be an inoffensive

interactor, which means that he must not fail to interact (though some allowances are made in the cases of persons suffering extreme physical or emotional pain). It is as though the webs of society are too weak to support the dead weight of a truly autistic person, whose little hole that he makes in social reality is yet seen as infinitely deep and beckoningly vertiginous to his closely enmeshed familiars. Poised on its brink they maybe feel that, if they too fall down the hole, they will take with them all their familiars too, who will drag theirs down after them, and so on until nobody is left in society to do what George Eliot (1957) in Daniel Deronda called "keeping up the forms of life" (Ch IV). The reason for keeping up the forms in Daniel Deronda was the beauty, the rarity, and "decision of will which made itself felt in the graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones" of Gwendolen Harleth, who might be one example out of many millions providing similar reasons for honouring the human as a sacred being.

Sources of respect: The ubiquitous rituals, through which people show respect to one another and also to their relationships, do not model relations held across time and space and in and out of encounters so much as dramatize approved orientations to approved shared values. Persons in interaction, then, demonstrate how they relate to moral ideologies that also prescribe the forms of such demonstration, and spontaneous and interpretable behaviour must be provided to allow others to know where a person stands in relationships whose mutual involvement must be of the kind that does not forget to appear to forget itself. (In the extreme, lovers should try to also forget not to forget to appear to forget, because forgetting this could be a falling out.) Since social life would grind to a standstill if every appearance had to be checked out, trust is a societal necessity<sup>3</sup> that straightway opens the possibility of its betrayal. The

more sacred the betrayed person the more serious is the betrayal; conversely, lowly persons like children and mental patients can expect frequent betrayals. So, when a Tsar is shot or the wife of Chairman Mao put on trial, one might connect such desacralizations to complete reversals in official moral ideology. The extent of ritual reversals might be then one index of the distance travelled between old and new orders. In an order that is unchanging, betrayal funnels everywhere can only operate, therefore, by reversing instead the character of the betrayed person. Thus the practice of obliging a convicted criminal to wear demeaning attire is one method of compelling him to demonstrate the fall from civic respectability that is presumed to have been devised from within himself and not issued to him as a uniform.

Certain notions of human worth can become the point of leverage for the turning round of an entire society, for a society that condones inhumane treatment of any of its citizens can lose the commitment of its humane citizens, and ultimately come to suffer from their opposition. The central issue for any society, organisation, or group may be, then, its tolerable level of inhumanity. At a certain point of perceived intolerability, a group, though possibly locked together by economic, racial, historical, and other considerations, can radically split on this issue, though of course a split group may not be dysfunctional for some higher order goal than humane life for all. But life in most places is not so thoroughly policed that there is not plenty of scope for disrespecting offenders to get off scot free as they carry their jokes a little too far, press their profanations a little too hard, refuse a courtesy too pointedly, or conspicuously fail to exorcise offences by apologising. Yet these petty desacralizations more penetratingly than the most repressive regime pierce to the heart of a person's sense of his ultimate

worth, and more than grosser, vaster, and more lifelong injustices can fill him with a destroying rage against the perpetrator, who merely treated his victim as less than his victim's cultural definition of a man.

Ritual model of interaction: Coming together involves people in a "joint ceremonial labor," and this is a lively fraternisation if compared to the symbolic interactionist model that would have persons on first meeting merely working out how to "fit their acts to one another in orderly joint actions" (Blumer, 1970). Where some symbolic interactionists imply a scrupulous mutual appraisal which when it goes wrong only adversely reflects on a person's intelligence, the ritual model, in contrast, does breathe life into interaction and give some hint that there do exist, everywhere, singular and deep relationships that can only begin in and be sustained by reciprocal conduct. More importantly, symbolic interactionism, for example, fails to acknowledge that what must be going on at all times<sup>4</sup>, as the necessary and sufficient basis for anything else that might be going on, is proper conduct with its constant referencing of relevant moral ideologies. Somehow the symbolic interactionists have not allowed for this fact that interaction can cease or change course if offence is given; they have by implication swept away the mainstay of interaction, ritual concern, into a residual category, as if politeness, for example, were mere embellishment of more serious "business" (Blumer, 1972), and not the prerequisite, continually, of any social conduct whatever. (Though Blumer is right to say that the business may have brought the persons together in the first place, it cannot follow that business will easily continue however rude persons are to one another, for as soon as rudeness emerges it becomes the business.) Furthermore, since it is unlikely that the sanctity of any two interacting persons can be precisely the same, there

will be discrepant ritual care of one person by the other. This means that the more sanctified person will have, for example, greater territorial rights than the other, and will be able to be more personal, invading the other's privacy with greater impunity. Thus, even if both persons are consciously engaged in mutual calculation of other factors in their relationship besides the ritual ones - as symbolic interactionism proposes - their very calculations are dependent on their relative ritual statuses. Interaction seen in ritual terms, then, is no longer a game in which the stakes hardly concern the actors; at every instant what is at stake before all else is the very self of each actor. As McDermott (1976) says, people are always playing out "intense identity struggles" even though they may not think that this is what they are doing.

The ritual model also possesses this advantage, that it includes under its rubric both unthinking activity and raw emotion, the former if too unthinking causing the latter and so revealing the transgressed rule so peremptorily as to require instant order-restoring redress. Thus embarrassment, for instance, seemingly disorder at its most convulsive, is perfectly accommodated by the ritual model in whose terms the person acting in an embarrassed fashion is not only the structural abeyance of two faces that cannot coexist but also an experience of intense discomfiture where relief ensures the rapid remedial action that keeps interaction in order.

Conclusion: Without doubt, the exemplary forms that guide behaviour are themselves vigorous creations of people, and their adoption as religious conviction, fashionable conduct, political stance, or style of relating may be vigorously prosecuted in the face of apparently contrary forms. The forms are given, but they do not have to be taken, and they may be changed. However, change is inevitably very slow, since the interlocked structures of interaction

that are social life contain, in every word, gesture, expression and glance, a check against any original form that, in causing difficulties of ritual interpretation, and for that reason alone, can be offensive. Even so simple an innovation as the divesting of swimming costumes on beaches will arouse violent reactions to the extent that Douglas et al (1977), researching a nude beach in California, have been moved to coin the category "creative deviance" for bathers, who, in challenging old forms, create new ones whose strength, like that of their predecessors, will be proportionate to the ritual importance of the form, itself derived from the dominance of a new sort of ideal person. For the nude bathers this ideal person freely accepts and glories in his physical self while the antagonistic ideal person has a decent reserve regarding parts of his or her body that connote private acts. Interaction, then, viewed ritually, tends to enforce its perpetuation along established lines. The costs of transgression are various kinds of ostracism. In the stalking ground, the stalking horse must be oneself doing the "done" things, even if the ultimate intent is to do different things.

#### Note

The foregoing chapter will have served its purpose if it has oriented the reader to the possibility and even desirability of viewing persons as ritual beings. In what follows I am less interested in the rules of interaction (which are the main interest of Erving Goffman) than in the ritual meaning of persons conceived as beings who cannot be disposed of analytically once an interaction has been explained in terms of its organization. Where Goffman has used the ritual frame in order to explain interaction per se, I am tending, therefore, to take the opposite tack of using interaction to explain the ritual frame.

## Notes

- 1 Shott (1979) explores how role attribution can come to define and name "raw" emotion states; Kemper (1978) similarly shows how power and status differentials in interaction activate emotions; and Hochschild (1975) argues that rational interaction requires emotional expression. None of these writers speculate about what it is about persons that makes them so vulnerable in social situations to feelings they often cannot contain.
- 2 Accepting a similar hypothesis, Trilling (1972) suggests that the contemporary search for what is authentic in persons (triggered by the knowledge that sincerity need not be authentic) is responsible for Freud's heavy emphasis on the power of the unconscious - "It was his purpose to keep all things from becoming 'weightless'" - and Laing's intimation that madness - or total denial of the social world - may be the one guarantee of authenticity.
- 3 Luhmann (1979) says that society's rationality depends on its ability to reduce complexity with mechanisms like law, organization, and language. Trust replaces missing information with internal security, and "the rational basis of a system of trust lies in the trust placed in the trust of other people." Trust is definitely not a reasonable assumption on which to decide correctly, because it is necessary precisely when decisions are to be made in the face of those uncertainties whose very condition is the lack of available reasonable assumptions. Distrust burdens the distruster with the problem of establishing what he can trust in exactly those situations where he needs to trust in order to escape such complexity. No complex society could be established without trust. However, trust of the kind that has the truster stabilizing his feelings towards those he trusts is not useful in a highly mobile, strongly differentiated social system, when he who has a capacity for "far-reaching indifference and readiness to

substitute" will fare better. Cathectic trust, that would make feelings "immune from refutation," must break down, and the fear of this causes anxieties that do not trouble those who rather than strengthening their internal security contrarilywise increase "bearable insecurity at the expense of security."

- 4 Blumer's (1972) assertion: "People in association do not go around with their attention constantly focused on how they are being regarded and on how they can influence the way in which they are regarded," has not been substantiated in the work of McQuown et al, Birdwhistell, Schefflen, McDermott, and many others. For example, the microanalysts Pittenger et al (1960) write: "No matter what else human beings may be communicating about, or may think they are communicating about, they are always communicating about themselves, about one another, and about the immediate context of the communication."



## Part Two

## CHAPTER IV

### RITUAL POWER: PUNKS AND NURSES

I wish now to introduce the concept of fashion, which, despite that it is very flimsy and only fleetingly connected to hard data, has inspired sociological passages<sup>1</sup> that direct attention from what cannot be seen under the surface of social forms back to the surface, in a fuller consciousness that many surface phenomena are neither superficial nor readily accountable in any frame.

Having very briefly summarised a particular tradition in the sociology of fashion, I shall use the concept in order to bias the reader's understanding - in the ensuing discussion of punks and nurses - towards those aspects of their conduct that are adapted in the pattern of external exemplars.

I have chosen punks and nurses because each group lends itself to ritual explication in a way that is clarified by that of the other, and because both are Weberian ideal types that stand at the opposite extremes of tendencies to contaminate and to sacralize that I

think most persons display.

Although there is some carryover of fashion ideas into Chapter V and beyond, they will not be there further elaborated. I stop working the concept almost as soon as I pick it up because its main purpose here is to pull the psychological rug out from under would-be sociological portraits of individuals who may be grouped by the name they are called, as are punks and nurses. In keeping with this purpose, I shall also write of punks and of nurses as though there need be no commonalities between members of each group except that they can be called by the name of their group.

Of course, punks and nurses only make sense to those who share their ritual code, which they both share with each other. For example, when I note that a punk does not mind being spat on by another punk, I assume that my readers, like me, will think that this is not usual. Similarly, when I note that a nurse puts on plastic gloves before inserting a suppository, I assume that readers, as I do, will feel that this is suitably decontaminative behaviour. It should not be thought, however, that all possible readers will share these assumptions, for, as Mary Douglas (1966) suggests, "our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications" (p. 36). Douglas, in fact, is quite insistent that "uncleanness or dirt is that

which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained" (p. 40). Pollutants, she says, only pollute in so far as they can be read as upsetting a given symbolic order. By implication, therefore, one order is logically on a par with any other, and so the idea that spittle or human excrement contaminates comes not from the nature of the substance but from its ambiguous status in a pollution system. The punks, as will be seen, eloquently speak for the power of such a system, since much of their conduct is deliberately polluting, in the system's terms, with the more general aim of polluting the political order that upholds the pollution system.

Nurses need no introduction to the modern reader, but punks do need introducing because they are a very recent youth culture, originating in Great Britain towards the end of 1976. At the time of writing, 1981, there are still a few punks in all the major cities of Great Britain, though the fashion has softened considerably since its inception. In what follows, those who have only come across punks in the latter part of the last five years might think, therefore, that I am exaggerating the power of their conduct. Also, it should be born in mind that, though I talk of punks' conduct in the present tense, much of it is now no longer seen, being out of date.

The purpose of this chapter is very simple. I examine the "ritualness" - as that is understood in Erving Goffman's ritual frame - of punks and nurses, to see how they increase it for themselves by their interaction conduct, especially through their manner of handling pollutants. The chapter will conclude that ritualness is not a fixed quantity for a person but is his degree of "ritual power" as this can be acquired by his conduct.

### The Concept of Fashion in Sociology

Blumer (1969) says that fashion operates in nearly every social world, and "may influence vitally the central content of any field." Konig (1973) thinks that fashion influences a diverse range of social behaviours, from human posture, gait, movement, and expression to attitudes, interests, ideas, and occupations. The Langs (1961) claim that voice and manners are as susceptible to changes in fashion as women's apparel; and Sapir (1931) notes the same seeming inutility of fashion changes in amusements and furniture that Robinson (1958) comes across in cars and buildings. With formidable confidence Simmel (1957) asserts that human expression, the social forms, and aesthetic judgement too are carried on under the rule of fashion, while Sumner (1959) lists all human conduct, particularly nominating diseases, trading methods, logic, philosophy, and science as fashion-governed. Even a contemporary journalist, Tom Wolfe (1973), defines certain styles of political

radicalism as "chic", meaning that they are donned with as little or as much thought as fashionable attire. The social ubiquity of fashion, moreover, has the cautious Blumer (1969) not only reflexively commenting that "contemporary social science is rife with the play of fashion," but also advocating that "fashion should be recognised as a central mechanism in forming social order in a modern type of world, a mechanism whose operation will increase." However, there seems to be only one common denominator of all of these fashion analyses: the baffled definition of fashion as a peremptory, widespread change in outer forms, whose societal causes can only be guessed at.

No studies have connected changes in fashion to societal changes, but, on the basis of an impressionistic historical survey, Bell (1947) thinks any such correlations are obscure. Robinson (1976) does establish that fashions in men's facial hair have no apparent relationship to major historical events, though obeying a cycle strikingly similar to the one Kroeber (1919) detected in a study of women's evening wear over a 75-year period, but this cycle does not appear to match any known socio-historical cycle. Apropos of the difficulties of finding a "law of fashion", Kroeber (1919) writes that "a geologist could as usefully set himself the task of explaining the size and shape of each pebble in a gravel bed," for in the play of fashion, "we are but such stones." Blumer (1968), Konig (1973), and

Robinson (1958) conclude that fashion is an arbitrary law unto itself, but considered in the context of the "mores" (also called "custom" and "culture") fashion might (1) have an experimental function (Blumer, 1968); (2) provide a link to the "Zeitgeist" (Meyersohn & Katz, 1957); (3) be a means of changing culture (Sapir, 1931; Sumner, 1959); and (4) create stimulation (Park, 1921). Tarde (1903) interestingly associates a strong feeling for custom with an attachment to nation and a weak attachment to nation with a strong feeling for period, in which it is fashion that rules. Polhemus (1978), idiosyncratically, would designate "custom" clothes "anti-fashion", a term he also ascribes to body decorations such as tattooing, scarification, cranial deformation, removal of body parts, circumcision, subincision, clitorrectomy, tooth filing, and ear, nose and lip piercing, and in driving a wedge between slowly changing forms and rapidly changing forms he seems to want to identify anti-fashion with custom, from which Sapir (1931) says fashion disengages itself to show a sort of societal role distance. The Langs (1961), too, in claiming for culture the ability to set limits to fashion, confine the concept of fashion to what is changing relatively quickly, as if in the hope that what is changing relatively slowly will be tractable to the rational explanations that fashion confounds.

There is, however, a consensus that fashions are both dictatorial - Park calls them a "ceremonial government"

and Sumner thinks they are "stronger than autocracy" - and whimsical, simultaneously defying and enticing easy rationalizations<sup>2</sup>. Fashions, it is agreed, are called fashions if it is thought or hoped that they will die. Those fashions that do die are then exposed as having been fashions all along, because it is in the nature of a fashion to have not looked like one when holding sway (Simmel, 1957). Fashions die suddenly (Robinson, 1958) and the new is always driven in by the old (Meyersohn & Katz, 1957). So fashion, then, is always partly out of control (Park, 1921), and carries its own death sentence; and perhaps that is one reason why the word fashionable is derogatory, even though the rejoinder unfashionable is also a put-down.

Fads stand to fashions as fashions to customs, and even from fashion-apologists like Blumer draw the sort of venomous attributions of irrationality that fashion fashionably attracts, sometimes being called "crazes", as if their failure to fit into neat societal theories was their fault.

Simmel originated the trickle-down theory that has been taken over by marketing researchers and endorsed by Fallers (1967), Barber & Lobel (1952), and Robinson (1960, 1963). The theory holds that since the lower classes are always emulating higher classes, the higher classes to avoid identification with their imitators must be forever altering their styles. Blumer (1969)



has an excellent rebuttal of this. He says that, because the central imperative of fashion is to be in fashion, it must be the fashionable who are emulated; the rich, then, are not copied because they are rich but because they have afforded themselves fashionable appearances. However, I think Blumer's impeccable argument that there need be no relation between the status of a fashion itself and statuses as they exist in that fashion's surrounding culture need not reflect the truth.

Blumer (1969) speculates that the societal function of fashion might be to free energies from outmoded forms in a "collective groping" for future forms, providing, through uniformity, a continuity that prevents anarchy, while Fallers (1967) says that fashion for the individual allows him to share a success that is not his. But fashion's adherents, asserts Polhemus (1978), only advertise their freedom from existing groups, and Sapir (1931) is reduced to claiming for the fashionable, in the absence of any other significance, a "symbolic significance".

Perhaps, however, there is no simple purpose for fashion because all it does is provide dominant conduct models for those aspects of behaviour that feel free to choose their own forms. Conduct with no social reference will have no need for fashion, since such conduct cannot convey anything, and conduct that is not free to choose, of course, will not be able to change its forms in any

direction whatsoever. Fashion conduct, then, will not be pronounced in repressed societies or in societies where people are relatively uninterested in one another. However, contrary to present fashionable views of "fashion's slaves", it will be just where there are opportunities to change (with no fear of sanctions)<sup>3</sup> and just when people are very interested in one another, that fashion conduct might become all the conduct there is.

#### A Note on Studying Fashion

Fashion is a field in which there has been very little empirical study. Kroeber (1919) and Barber & Lobel (1952) have measured the dimensions of women's clothes in pictures. Horowitz (1975) has elucidated some relationships between designers, communicators, and consumers between 1964 and 1967 in Britain. Mueller (n.d.) has compared the repertoires of symphony orchestras. Robinson (1976) measured men's facial hair in pictures from the Illustrated London News from 1842 to 1972.

So far as I know, there is no study of the conduct of fashion adherents done by participant observation of the type that I practised with punks and with nurses.

The aspect of fashion conduct that has drawn my attention bears closely on its morality, in which connection Park (1921) has written:

There is no rebellion against fashion; no rebellion against social ritual ... There are breaches of etiquette that any ordinary human being would rather die than be guilty of.

Bell (1947) too, connects clothing to morals:

So strong is the impulse of sartorial morality that it is difficult in praising clothes not to use such adjectives as "right", "good", "correct", "unimpeachable", or "faultless", which belong properly to the discussion of conduct, while in discussing moral shortcomings we tend very naturally to fall into the language of dress and speak of a person's behaviour as being shabby, shoddy, threadbare, down at heel, botched or slipshod.

And Sapir (1931), noting that fashion is related to dress by its symbolism, describes art, morals, and thoughts as "costuming of the ego". Bearing this in mind, one can appreciate that fashion as a concept to be researched may be as well explored, at this time, by textual as by more obvious fieldwork methods.

It should be clear, as a starting point at any rate, that fashions against which "there is no arguing" unless one wants to be sanctioned with "ridicule and powerlessness" (Sumner, 1959) can thoroughly take over their adherents to the point that good behaviour is to be fashionable and bad unfashionable, whatever the fashion. And if fashion is truly ubiquitous, and if it is as autocratic as many sociologists believe, one already has to concede that to be a good person it is only necessary to do what every other up-to-date person is doing. I feel safe in saying that, at the time of writing, this, in my culture, is an unfashionable

proposition. It seems to mock a person's pretensions to moral seriousness, what I have called his ritual self. I found, for example, in the course of my research, that punks - supreme "slaves" to fashion - reject such a view by constantly asserting that a punk as it were inevitably expresses his "punkness" by his appearance. What a punk would never do, say punks, is cynically copy other punks in order to suggest that he might possess underlying "punkness". I cannot help wondering what a state of affairs, in which it was fashionable to say that one was only and completely a creature of fashion, might be like. Perhaps it would presage a sociological era when people would cut themselves free from fixed relationships and concentrate on playing all their present interactions for the pay-off of continually altering identities. In that case, it would structurally resemble life in Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington D.C., where Erving Goffman, pretending to be an assistant to the athletics director, observed the conduct that he reported twenty years ago in Asylums - with two main differences, that there would be no dossier (clinging to each person like a "paper shadow") from which antagonistic persons could select information with which to puncture claims, and there would be no possibility of release into a different world.

In the light of the above, and before moving on to the specific case of the punks, a second note on fashion's

unfashionability now seems called for.

### A Note on the Unfashionability of Fashion as a Concept

Why should fashion be a far more unfashionable concept to take seriously than, for example, class?

When Guy de Maupassant (1971) writes, "The ladies uttered shrieks of joy, and then examined the samples with that seriousness which comes naturally to women as soon as they lay their hands on an article of clothing," he is surely confident that his male readers, at least, will share in his bemused condescension, and many, of course, will. Likewise, George Eliot (1958) must have expected sardonic appreciation for her observation about Dorothea Brooke that "she could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life, involving external consequences, with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protusions of drapery."

Thomas Hardy (1980), more strongly still, in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, describes Angel Clare's two brothers in terms that leave no doubt as to his disdain for their fashionable conduct:

... non-evangelical, well-educated, hall-marked young men, correct to their remotest fibre; such unimpeachable models as are turned out yearly by the lathe of systematic tuition. They were both somewhat short-sighted, and when it was the custom to wear a single eyeglass and string they wore a single eyeglass and string; when it was the custom to wear a double glass they wore a double glass; when it was the custom to wear spectacles they wore spectacles straightaway, all without reference

to the particular variety of defect in their own vision. When Wordsworth was enthroned, they carried pocket copies; and when Shelley was belittled they allowed him to grow dusty on their shelves. When Careggio's Holy Families were admired, they admired Careggio's Holy Families; when he was decried in favour of Velasquez, they sedulously followed suit without any personal objection.

The effect of this passage by Hardy, as of the others, is to slight fashionable conduct by insinuating that it lacks any personal volition beyond that necessary to choose to follow it.

If it is the case, as I now suggest, that Western societies are becoming more fashion conscious in every social activity, then it must equally be the case that individuality is becoming more a matter of choosing which fashion group to belong to than of defying all fashions, which as I have quoted Sumner saying, invites ridicule, powerlessness, and ostracism. From this perspective, there would seem to be every reason to take fashion seriously. After all, Angel Clare's brothers were only different from Angel Clare and Thomas Hardy in isolating more transient customs for emulation, and, between a number of customs, who is to choose but by reference to other customs? Recently, the social psychologist Gregory Stone (1975) has spoken up for the most derided aspect of the derided concept of fashion, which is clothing:

... clothing represents our action, past, present and future, as it is established by the proposals and anticipations that occur in every social transaction.

By appearing, the person announces his identity, shows his value, expresses his mood or proposes his attitude.

The meaning of appearance, therefore, is the establishment of identity, value, mood and attitude for the one who appears by the coincident programs and reviews awakened by his appearances.

Perhaps this recognition of the crucial importance to interactions of actors' attire can give a lead as to how to put the volition back into fashionable conduct. Received wisdom on the subject has fashion adherents cast in the role of passive victims or dupes, who will wear or do anything if they think it is the fashion. Look at it from Stone's point of view, however, and one can see how great is the care that people must exercise to control their appearances, so as to integrate their self-conceptions with those of their others. Social life thus demands the existence of a readable sartorial code. Given that such codes already do exist, it is simply impossible for a person to go codeless, for that too would speak volumes of contempt in the sartorial idiom. Faced with having to put on an identity in a culture where idiosyncratic attire is ungrammatical, a person has no choice but to look to prevailing fashions. As Simmel (1957) has shown, fashion at once differentiates and collects its adherents; so it is the means by which the person can lay claim to personness without paying the costs of eccentricity. And even within a tightly prescribed fashion like punk, there is considerable room for variation: individuality may be contrived between certain parameters.

One of the techniques for devaluing fashion is to

define the fashionable into a separate group from the rest of humanity ; this comes, I think, of imputing one set of motivational relevances to phenomena that are taken for granted and another to those which shock. It is my view, however, that the pernicky fashion care at work in persons picking over a pullover counter in Marks and Spencers is no less open to the charge of being over-concerned with appearances than the care exercised by a punk in a pet shop choosing a dog collar to fasten round his neck. The one is just more familiar than the other, but both speak the same language. Punk, by its very nature, of course, is not just lowly because it is a fashion, for it is a low fashion, even seeming to disobey Simmel's trickle-down theory, except if looked at ritually. This is because it began among working class youths (the only groups it has been emulated by are the ultra-fashion-conscious beau monde of capital cities, who have improvised a sort of haute couture punk). There is no question of an Etonian, for instance, ever having stuck a safety pin through his cheek: so punk fashion can only be said to trickle down if it can be allowed that it possesses high ritual power, which would then cause it to be followed so that followers could acquire some of that power. What Tom Wolfe (1965) said of the mods is as true of the punks:

High styles came from low places, from people who have no power, who slink away from it, in fact, who are marginal, who carve out worlds for themselves in the nether depths, in tainted "undergrounds".



It is the style of life that makes them unique, not money, not power, not position, talent, intelligence. So like most people who base their lives on style, they are rather gloriously unaffected cynics about everything else.

(Wolfe, 1968)

If my suspicion, that social life is tending to become more and more "fashion life", is correct, one can see from commentators like Wolfe how the sixties phrase "life-styles" portended this. At no other time in European history had it become acceptable to think of ways of living as so many styles to be selected from, and, indeed, changed at will. But one can anticipate, if this sort of orientation were to take hold in sociology, a vigorous backlash against it by all those who would jump to the conclusion that the "real" facts of social situations can never be signalled by "mere" appearances. This would be in keeping with a very long-standing European intellectual fashion of compulsively ignoring surfaces for what is below them, before beginning any analysis. Fashions might never be allowed to be seen as autonomous movements of change that have the power to mass-produce lookalike humans in almost any imaginable form. There will be a great deal of effort devoted to tying them to persons' psychologies, for example, but, as Blumer (1968) has argued, no psychological explanation of fashion conduct can say why a psychological process gives rise to the conduct that is fashion conduct, because all psychological explanations presuppose the existence of fashion.

#### Punks<sup>4</sup>

As in the section on nurses which concludes this chapter, I introduce my metaphor of the stalking ground very sparingly here, and use the idea of persons as ritual beings with circumspection. In the whole of this chapter, I have remained "close to the data," which, as I have indicated in Chapter I, is possible precisely at the expense of theoretical expansion. The main purpose of this chapter is to justify the concept "ritual power," but it is also inevitable that the chapter will contribute to an understanding of nurses and punks as substantive topics in their own right.

#### General Introduction to Punks<sup>5</sup>

In any sociological study some of the phenomena has to be spirited into the account in a state of analytic undress before the analyst can quickly garb it in his terms so as to eventually prove that it does indeed look its best wearing those. Put differently, I cannot talk of punks ritually unless I first produce them unritually; I must speak the language of everyday to begin with, or not begin. Thus, I now provide a few remarks about punks that suffer from the fate that as much as they are effective, they will detract from the value of later ritual remarks.

Either gender can adopt the punk fashion once into the teenage years, though attendance at school works against a punk's credibility. An upper age limit would seem to be the early or middle twenties, but most punks<sup>6</sup> are in their late teens, as far from educational institutions as from adult institutions like marriage. Many punks are unemployed and express a feeling of being on the outside of what they call society: off-the-peg occupational identities are either unavailable or demeaning.

A punk can only become a punk by wearing the punk fashion and the first time he does this is a "coming out" (Warren & Ponse, 1977; Becker, 1970; Matza, 1969). Punks are highly conscious of their appearance and not only carefully fake the details of its ravagement and apparent ill-use, but also taboo any but general comments about it, preferring to try to fathom whatever it might be beneath the appearance that, in their view, causes it. This emerges in the process of "fantasy chaining"<sup>7</sup> when it is frequently asserted that it would be possible to be a punk without wearing punk gear. Those who are thought of as the real punks, however, are scornful of "Friday night" punks who put on the fashion just for an evening out and take it off before applying for a job. Yet even the full-time punks I interviewed confessed to wearing non-punk fashions when appearing in courts on assault charges, but were apologetic about this in one another's presence. A punk who finally discards his

punk attire is said to "go smooth", and this is not regarded as a moral progression but as a backing down, a chickening out, a betrayal, and a defeat.

Rather than be "nobodies" with little sacred value, punks, relatively unqualified to sanctify themselves by the acquisition of wealth, power, status, talent, title, or whatever, can go only in the direction of profanation if they would come into possession of what is ritually beyond their achievable social deserts. A punk must profane himself, then, to the point of threatening all those who see him and interact with him with a contagious contamination. Of this threat, Mary Douglas (1966, p. 113) writes:

A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone ... Pollution can be committed intentionally ... The power which presents a danger for careless humans is very evidently a power inhering in the structure of ideas, a power by which structure is expected to protect itself.

So the punk attacks the society that he feels has rejected him, by putting himself in the wrong, so as to give himself an aura of danger. The avoidance by other people, then, of his polluting self, is to the punk proportional to a greater ritualness he thereby comes into. Just as a celebrity walks on hallowed ground and may be jokingly referred to as "his highness" (and may work in the seclusion of what his aides call the "holy of holies") so the punk with every step he takes

seems to be descending into a realm of evil which is known to be that both by his others and by himself, just because there is a common pollution code. The punk is one with Baudelaire's (1964) dandies:

All partake of the same characteristic of opposition and revolt; they are all representatives of what is finest in human pride, of that compelling need, alas only too rare today, of combating and destroying triviality.

Dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence ... glorious, without heat and full of melancholy.

However, though the punk speaks the same ritual idiom as his audience, he speaks it better, for if he would stay in circulation by living between the limits of propriety and legality he must have an enhanced sensitivity to both.

I shall now describe how punks desacralize themselves, and, since their doing this plays so large a part in the creation of their fashion, I shall also be giving, by the way, a fairly comprehensive account of the punk fashion. This is an ethnocentric account because it relies on readers appreciating, without having to be told, that acts like vomiting on stage are not "normal". What I hope to show through this account are not the reasons why punks feel they should have extra ritualness, but rather how they go about getting it, and in what it consists. (Nonetheless, the ritual code, which they share with all those readers this narrative would make sense to, is so pervasive that, when I describe how

ritualness may be lost by their desacralizations, an immediate reaction is to take the prevention of that loss as a fully sufficient reason for acquiring more of what would be lost.)

### The Physical Self

Hair: Hair is dyed by both sexes, usually the artificial colours of peroxide blond, pink, lime green, and jet black. Several colours can be combined on one head, and into closely-cropped scalps might be dyed patterns such as a spider's web or a question mark. Male punks' hair can also be completely shaved, or, if very closely cut in the neo-Skinhead style, have patterns shaved into it (the wavy seam of a tennis ball was popular during the Wimbledon summer of 1979). Alternatively, hair may be tousled up into unkempt spikes and then frozen into place by spray-on starch. Improvisations on these themes are not unusual; for example, one Bath punk has a mohican cut, with the variation that the long central strip of hair is drawn up into six-inch long spokes that give him a cockatoo look.

Several violations are at work here. Punk hair is always visually prominent to a degree not seen in Britain since the advent of long hair in the sixties. Thus, the treatment of the hair proclaims that it is there purely for decorative purposes and that it is raw material for often violent chemical experiment (Bath

punks, for example, used to splash Woolworths' peroxide onto their heads, and when the hair, attacked at its roots, began to fall out, they shaved it off completely). The forms of the decoration, moreover, are outlandish. Punk hair, then, is always designed to be bizarre and outrageous so that it must not only violate modesty norms, but also violate norms against violating these. So by the purchase and application of dye a person transforms himself into a double offender, for, not showing shame for one offence, he offends again, and thus is on the way to his classification as an "animal" or a "mindless moron" by those he offends.

Mutilations: The early punks who set the fashion wore several rings in each ear and often had rings or studs in their noses too. Safety-pins were the rage in 1977: these would be pinned into the face and sometimes a chain would connect the safety-pin<sup>8</sup> to an earring. This kind of adornment offends, as does the hair, but with additional force since it is brought about by painful self mutilation. Through his safety-pins, the punk says that even if it hurts him, he will hurt you.

Where the flesh of the body shows, tattoos are usually in evidence, often of home-made manufacture, as if to say that both design and irreversible physical change are matters of indifference to a punk. The argument once again is very simple. He who does that to himself is seen as not caring about himself and so

disqualifies himself as a proper person twice over, by not caring and then by not caring about looking as if he does not care.

Another mutilation of the self is the frequently seen cutting of the forearms - with razors or jackknives - in herring bone patterns; this combines the flagrancy of self-injury with the casual irreversibility of the tattooing.

Make-up: The make-up of punk girls is usually a whitening of natural tones, made more masklike still by the painting of lips with "dead" colours like mauve or brown. Heavy black lines emphasise the eyes, and early punk girls would use, in place of a beauty spot, little swastikas. Punk girls often have a startling, aggressive femininity as if they belong to a tribe living on in the rubble after a nuclear holocaust. (Boys rarely wear make-up, but when they can, cultivate spots and pimples.) The overall impression one gets from some of the punk girls is of 1930s Berlin night-life designed by Edgar Allen Poe, which is quite antithetical to current "educationalist" and liberal dogma about the wholesomeness of healthy sex, for instance.

#### Clothes and Ornaments

Punk clothes are usually old, and are always torn carefully. T-shirts especially are ripped, but jackets will come in for this treatment too, unless they are



old leather motorcycle jackets, when slogans, logos, and caricatures will be painted on their backs. Boys wear "bondage trousers" which are trousers whose legs are attached to each other by straps, and some of the girls have revived the mini-skirt, which they wear so as to expose the tops of stockings, held up by suspender belts. The rejection of "liberated" tights in favour of soft-porn stockings is then reversed again by the wearing of baseball boots on the stockinged feet. At concerts some girls are clad in plastic bin-liners and very long T-shirts instead of dresses, and a proportion of the boys always make sure to wear their "bum-flaps" (a nappy that hangs over the seat of the trousers) for these occasions. In some areas kilts worn over trousers are as popular as the bum-flaps, but for footwear, the boys usually choose boots of the kind that the skinheads wear.

Favourite patterns are leopard spots and tartans, which together with the bum-flaps and kilts convey a sort of kitsch atavism, a connection to tribal behaviour that reaches no further back than to pictures in old copies of the National Geographical Magazine that may once have been thumbed through at school. So if the punk does want to look like a savage, he would prefer to be an ignoble one, who is only really at home in scenes of urban squalour, or in the comic strip jungle of Tarzan.

Both T-shirts and leather motor-cycle jackets (punks will not own or ride motorcycles) are hand-decorated. Names of favourite punk groups such as the Sex Pistols, Sham 69, Adam and the Ants, are frequent slogans on these, as are the titles of and lines from famous punk "hits".

Both sexes like to fasten round their necks either dog collars or the padlocks and chains that are usually used to secure bicycles. Here again, as with the safety-pins, by singling out not only extremely cheap ornamentation, but ornaments that have a degraded social function, the punks score twice: cheap and low at the same time.

Combinations and variations of their clothes and ornaments, in addition to styles of hair and body decoration, are multifarious, and those elements that I have enumerated are neither all-inclusive nor are meant to suggest relative frequencies of each, for I am concerned here to give a general description of a diachronic fashion by a synchronic resume that captures what, on the basis of my research into punk taken as a whole, seems to be its best representation.

Thus, by deliberately flaunting himself in attire that is old, torn, sloganised, and misappropriated, the punk breaks the rule that normal appearances should not alarm. His tied-together legs, his bum flap, his girl friend in baseball boots and fishnet tights, do

succeed in appearing to many non-punks as both deliberated and alarming, at any rate until the fashion is neutralized by being recognised as a fashion. The effect of these clothes, worn with the dyed hair and the safety pins, may be imagined when it was seen for the first time along the Kings Road in the Autumn of 1976. Commentators yet again mistook a fashion for a revolution, because it was a fashion that seemed to hate fashion, as fashion was then fashionably understood.

### Movement

Punks have evolved their own style of dancing called the pogo, and it informs many of their non-dancing movements as well. To perform it, you jump up and down on the spot either with both arms held stiffly to the sides or, if at concerts, with one arm punching a fist into the air at the height of each leap. Punks at concerts usually pogo in a mass, crushed against the stage, and they are never quite in rhythm with one another. If a punk, while pogoing, wishes to show appreciation of the singer on stage, he will spit at him, timing his release of the gob of spittle to take place at his apogee, from where he will help the gob on its way with a flick of his head.

This kind of dancing, which minimizes skill, grace and invention, is performed with a zombie-like facial expression that further creates the impression of limited personality. It is a style of dancing with practically all that one associates with "dance" removed.

By never dancing in two-sexed pairs, punks convey not only their indifference to the execution of dance steps but also a refusal of prescribed courtship rituals, for which paired dancing is commonly an important transition stage. But a punk can succeed in throwing himself into the activity of dancing as well as any other person; he does this by increasing both his tempo and the height to which he leaps. A subtle variant is to refuse to leap at all but to root the feet to the floor and wrestle the upper torso in imitation of the writhings of a man in a straightjacket. This suggests even greater energy by its painful inhibition. Such disciplined simplifications of movements match the moron masks, and go well with the bondage trousers that suit a pogoing style and the connotations of strapped-in insanity.

I always used to notice that, whenever and wherever and for whatever purpose a punk moves, he tends to evoke the pogo, his dance of complete self-involvement that jumps up and down on any idea that dancing should be gracious or should be part of a love relationship.

In dancing his way, punks can powerfully convey the contempt they feel for that sort of youthful conduct their elders could look at with indulgent approval. It is as if punks intend to be their own marionettes, pulling their own strings.

Punks generally move about as if recovering from accidents that nearly crippled them, and they try to make it plain at all times that the accident was that of being born amongst non-punks. With every step they take, they try to walk away from their environments and thus, while trying to upset those who think that punks should be grateful for their environments, begin to take on the ritual look that can be had by seeming to be in touch with non-temporal events. Their physical awkwardness can almost suggest a lost utopia where they might have felt at ease, but they will try to capitalise on this suggestion by a nihilistic dismissal of its possibility in reality or in dreams. They want to be the twice dispossessed, so that their selves here on the streets of the cities, like so many pricks, as it were, will puncture and let the air of conviviality out of all possible social gatherings, and they are this way vengefully, because they see so little conviviality in the first place.

#### Physical Unconcern

1. Losing a fight, to a punk, is no less honourable than winning, because he has lost anyway in any wider sense, and believing this, the punk raises himself above those who would fight him, since the other's victory or defeat is beneath his contempt.
2. The practice of spitting, which waned early, was for a time a form of greeting between punks, and as such,

of course, was an almost exact reversal of conventional greeting protocol within which a gob of spit would be goodbye rather than hello.

3. Masturbation has won the approval of punks; one early fanzine, indeed, was called White Stuff. It is easy to see that by celebrating single person sex, the punks can show their disrespect for conventional couplings, the pleasures of which they will show no signs of appreciating. As a corollary to this, the punks also affect disinterest in copulation, tending to bracket it with functions like urination.

4. Punks try to ignore the cold, the wet, the wind, and other environmental discomforts. Those who bother about such things in their view are over-concerned with the welfare of selves that they cannot see as being worth protecting. Knowing life is uncomfortable, a punk attempts to feel more comfortable by doing nothing about it.

### Self-Stigmatization

Taylor (1976) notes that football supporters on the terraces have recently taken to chanting "Hooligans! Hooligans!" Similarly, punks give themselves a bad name as if to deride those to whom it is bad, and the badness is a negative ritualness deriving from the label, which, says Rotenberg (1974), sticks from the inside because it is both "autosuggestive" and "transformative".

Punks also refer to themselves as kids, on the grounds that adults have no moral integrity, an argument which they choose not to turn back on their own moral manoeuvre of covering themselves in shit in order to smell for themselves like roses. Some latter-day punks, to dissociate themselves from hangers-on, have coined a new label, "wimp", for punks who, too wet to be fully-fledged punks, are not wet enough to be non-punks. (Only the rock singer, Gary Numan, seems to have stuck this to himself so far.) This eager adoption of a derogatory label must work in the same way as the physical and sartorial self-profanations. I abuse myself before you can abuse me, and, what is more, I have the courage to abuse myself more thoroughly than you would, and therefore, possessing this superior courage, I do not deserve to be abused. So my being a punk proves that I am not a punk, so long as I am a punk.

A self-stigmatizer, then, says that stigmas matter less to him than to his audience, and they can only matter less to him if he is more worthy to begin with. In practice, the stigma and the presumed worth must arrive simultaneously, but either way, the stigma by its being worn with pride, increases ritualness.

So I have now enumerated how punks desacralize their physical selves, their clothes and ornaments, their physical movements, their bodily welfare, and their generic label. Each single self-profanation is easily comprehended only if the punk is seen as profaning himself to cause those around him to be "taken aback", as they would not be were he not so profaned. I suggest now that what the punk is doing, by suffering his own ritual degradations with perfect sang-froid, is raising himself above those who feel he has lowered himself. The logic is: I have torn down my respectability and am unperturbed, therefore I have more ritualness than you, because you do not believe my contaminations could not decrease ritualness, and so, when you call me an animal, I, knowing I am not that - being just anybody who has put on a punk appearance - know I am more than you who would be an animal if you degraded yourself as I do, and my coolness about your name-calling is what provokes it and what proves that you feel my superior ritual power.

Since this is the case, it is appropriate now to christen the ritualness that punks increase for themselves "ritual power". I contend that "ritualness" is not a simple "given" for a person because he is a person and is not in any simple way connected to formal societal statuses but can be profoundly altered in interaction by conduct alone. It makes sense to call such an interactional property a "power", when it can have the



effect punks' ritual power has of completely removing them from the normal realm and investing them with something that, if it does not command awe in its onlookers, commands a sort of respect that behaves like respect, even though it longs to be disrespect. Once the concept "ritual power" is in use it becomes much easier to grasp my argument that ritualness may come and go for a person in interactions, and this I believe is a line of thought never pursued by Erving Goffman, despite his being the one social scientist to be keenly aware of the importance in interaction of ritual concerns.

Now I want to answer an obvious question that arises at this point: why choose to profane oneself by taking on the punk fashion when there are any number of different ways of achieving personal degradation. After that, I wish to contextualise the punks by considering their music and their concerts and then their behaviour in public places, before finally looking at their ideology, such as it is. Each of these latter sections will add to an understanding of how punks go about increasing their ritual power once they have got themselves up to look like punks.

#### Why Punk in Particular?

Since there are many other ways of profaning oneself than by becoming a punk, how is it that punks are a recognisable group whereas, for example, some

categories of mental patients, such as indecent exposers, are not? The only answer I think lies in the fact of punk being a fashion. Since fashions, as Simmel (1957) said, differentiate their followers at the same time that they group them, the follower of a fashion is not alone. So fashion legitimates by multiplying its instances. This of course provides a deplorably thin justification of action for anybody, that it is right because others do it, but I think this is a fairly universal self-justification. As I have said, it may be, too, that a real fashion cannot know itself for that until it is over, so punks, for example, are just the most recent group in a long line of groups that each thought it was the end of the line. This would also account for its followers uniformizing themselves: they are not, so far as they are concerned, following a fashion, but joining a sort of sect.

It should be said here that punks so far have successfully brought down on their heads just the kind of treatment they want. A review of press reports over the last five years reveals an unremitting attitude to them as being folk devils (Cohen, 1980), but the difference between punks as folk devils and Cohen's Teddy Boys as folk devils is that punks have consciously sought this attribution. I would expect this to continue until the fashion dies, when those who would then be folk devils will have to assume another guise whose terms again will be set by the wider society. Many

writers using a subculture perspective, however, often imply a model in which a new subculture grows out of the old, as if isolated from non-youth ritual idioms, but punks themselves are incurious about earlier fashions and, being very young, usually have come of age directly into their fashion, so there is little sense of their having themselves matured through successive fashions into the punk fashion. In fact the only fashion punks actively decry is the hippy fashion, and it is easy to see how the hippy over-sacralization of everything from personal relationships to the planet itself presents a clear antithesis for the punks to revile. (Punks would not pick fights with hippies any more than they would fight normals. I think this is because fighting is an intimate form of interaction which relies on shared ground rules, as these are known by neo-Mods, Skinheads, and the like, who have frequent run-ins with punks.)

Thus far, it should be noted, punks have masked their self-consciousness very effectively, not that I do not think Simon Frith (1978) to be exaggerating when he writes: "What's going on here is not the spontaneous confirmation of subcultural theory, but the deliberate use of subcultural ideology by young sophisticates who've read their Stan Cohen and Jock Young and understand deviancy theory as a neat form of legitimation." Nonetheless, when the leading punk rock group, the Sex Pistols, issued an L.P. without songs, comprising recordings of interviews given by the group on British

and American radio and TV, all interpolated with a voice-over declaring their manager, Malcolm McLaren, to be an exploiter, the punks took it in good part, buying it, not as sucker consumers, but as members of a group in on a "sophisticated" joke against the commercialization of rock-and-roll. (Naturally that joke is "contained" (Goffman, 1975) by their buying the record being seen as a joke, and that containment is further contained if the dupe knows he is a dupe and still buys because that is the punk thing to do.) Very few of the punks I have spoken to, however, had the formal education to understand the possible significance of McLaren's<sup>9</sup> alleged activities with the Situationists' International of Paris in May 1968, nor could they appreciate the Garfinkel-style methods this group employs to "breach" spectacles so as to visibilize their "repressive" rules (in the same way that Baader-Meinhoff effectively used terrorism in the belief that this would expose West Germany as a police state). But the spirit of breaching is readily appreciated and endorsed by punks.

### The Music and the Concerts

Like the rhythm of most other rock music, punk's is a repetitive equal-weighted beat, but punk is harsher, denser, and more chaotic in the mix than any rock-and-roll that has preceded it. Its lyrics, drawing on a nihilistic rhetoric of squalid metropolises, are hardly sung; rather they are scrawled across a surface of rough electronic sound as violently as obscene graffiti

on slum walls. The musicians who have taken up this style of playing are the first in Britain for more than ten years to graduate, without the aid of talent scouts and A and R men, from pubs and clubs to nationwide marketing networks. They have been quick to turn their disadvantage of musical incompetence into a moral superiority, showing it off as evidence of an authentic will to express essentially inexpressible boredom and frustration. Of course, they are not the first to be opportunistic about their lack of talent:

Perhaps the whole alienation atmosphere of our times - from Dada's rejection of high official art, through Surrealism's taboo on reason and the formal plot, to existentialist disillusion with all idealistic morality - has finally led film Undergrounders ... to repudiate their own technical tradition as artificial and formalist.

Thus Parker Tyler (1974) on the precursors of Andy Warhol's casually careless film constructions.

The exemplary group was the quickly disbanded Sex Pistols, who stand to punk as the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix did to the heavier hippies. Sometimes their songs exactly articulate a bitter, vengeful emotion of wantonly despoliated hope:

When there's no future  
How can there be sex  
We're the flowers in the dustbin  
We're the poison in your human machine  
We're the future  
Your future.

One cannot do justice to the ecstatic recognition that punks show when they hear that song which, despite being

banned by the BBC, went to Number One in the British charts. The Clash did less well with another seminal punk song, "White Riot":

Black men have got a lotta problems,  
But they don't mind throwing a brick,  
But white men have got too much school  
Where they teach you to be thick.

The Buzzcocks also catch a typical punk attitude of slovenly dismissal in their song "Sixteen", which ends with this appraisal of the then available teenage sound:

And I hate modern music  
Disco boogie and pop  
They go on and on and on and on and on  
How I wish they would stop.

Sexual love is extolled, typically, as follows, by a group called Alternative Television:

I never want to find out who the girls have been servicing  
I never want to know who the guys have been doing  
It's a mess up  
It's a fuck up  
'Cos fucking anybody always knocks me out quite a lot  
I never care who I go to bed with  
Male or female, there's never any sense in it  
It's a bother  
It's a cocker  
'Cos cocking anybody always bothers me, my love lies  
limp, limp, limp.

None of this, of course, is of a different ritual order to Elvis Presley, twenty-five years earlier, of whom Thom Gunn (1962) wrote then:

Distorting hackneyed words in hackneyed songs  
He turns revolt into a style, prolongs  
The impulse to a habit of the time.

To make a mark, the groups, who inherited a tradition in rock-and-roll of some of the most outrageous stage conduct ever seen, found it necessary on stage to shout obscenities, to spit, to vomit, and to urinate. Concert hall managers did not understand, and groups were banned from venues, this becoming an affidavit of authenticity. Those that could get "gigs" then often incited fans to smash up halls. One singer (from the group Chelsea) I personally saw shouting repeatedly: "This place is too clean, let's smash it up." That was as late as 1980 in the Locarno Ballroom in Bristol, a hall thronged with large anxious-looking men in dinner suits. Being banned from stages, like being banned from the airwaves, guarantees that no "selling-out" can occur. So the groups and the punks can play at feeling as if they are really dangerous people, because they are treated as if they are, even if at their own prompting, which they give, they say, as a result of being born into a society that uses them for its dirty jobs, if there are any. Distrust of idols who might sell out runs rampant among fans whose attitude to the big names of yesteryear is summed up by this diatribe of an "angry rock fan" in Hennessy (1978):

This is what it was like, right? If you wanted to see the Who or Bowie or Dylan you had to queue up for days to get a ticket. You'd go to the Isle of Wight and there's mud everywhere and no bogs and people pissing all over your sleeping bag and everyone's starving hungry and getting ripped off 50p for a hard-boiled egg. There's empty beer cans and garbage, and it's raining and you're so far away from the stage you can't even see it, let alone guess who's on it. When the groups come

on, the amps distort the sound and what comes out is a mangled version of your favourite number. Then, afterwards, the stars zap off in their Rolls Royces with all their beautiful trendy pals while we have to hitch home. And it's us who've paid big money for the tickets and bought millions of their records and made them the rich, untouchable bastards they've become.

Punk singer Jimmy Pursey of Sham 69 puts it more succinctly in one of his lyrics:

It's a rip-off for you  
It's a Rolls Royce for them.

The gobbing of singers becomes intelligible, seen in this light, as a desacralization that collects the singer to the punk group, allowing the group to then share in some of the ritual power the singer has by virtue of being on stage.

Many punks are sufficiently "into" their music to cut their own records in the growing number of small hire-by-the-hour recording studios. They then carry these about with them like unused passports to stardom. The record creates an "I could if I wanted to" possibility for its owner, and this enhances his worth. However, punks do not listen to their music for its music, but for its punk. So long as the music can create the feeling that something powerful and inchoate is struggling to express itself, it is heard in much the same way that the St Matthew Passion would be heard by a member of the Christian faith. As a secular aesthetic experience punk, of course, is not to be compared with Bach, but to experience punk music as music is for a



punk a desecration, in the same way that punk music heard as music is just that for a musical sensibility.

The dominant punk group was the Sex Pistols, who constantly broke taboos, writing lyrics like "the Queen ain't no human being," swearing on television<sup>10</sup> and so forth. Their bass guitarist, Sid Vicious, was charged in New York with stabbing his girl friend to death in the Chelsea Hotel, and, released on bail from Ryker's Island after a suicide bid, he died not long after of a heroin overdose, and so became a punk martyr. "Sid lives", is a repeated logo on T-shirts, motorcycle jackets, and walls. If a martyr is someone who dies to preserve his believing self, then what Sid Vicious believed in, as do his followers today, has to be his superior ritual power.

Punks at all their concerts are searched at the door for weapons. I have watched several thousand individual searches and never once seen any objection. Perhaps punks feel complimented by being suspected of going armed.

Concert behaviour is standardised. Punks dress up in their most punk clothing and adornment, arrive early, and, crushed by one another against the front of the stage, pogo to every song. At moments of high excitement fists punch into the air, and from the edge of the pogoing mass some punks ride others pick-a-back

into the crowd, where they fall off and disappear from sight. There are scuffles in bar areas and toilets. Eyes everywhere are dangerously on the alert for signs of disrespect, and many punks are so drunk that they give these signs inadvertently. After the performances, a few punk girls and boys will hang around, hoping to be invited backstage by the group, but most disperse into neighbourhoods where police patrols will have been stepped up for the occasion. Punks at concerts, then, strenuously affirm their punk commitment, and concerts massively confirm that punk is not the fiction of each individual punk.

The centrality of music to subcultural life has been extensively noted by Fine & Kleinman (1979), who regard it as a type of information, by Martin (1979), who thinks concerts "liminalise" adolescents, and by Willis (1974), who has demonstrated how "bikers" live their musical styles. However, I do not choose to call punks a subculture, even though they may often be a "near-group" as Yablonsky (1970) defines this or a "contra-culture" in the sense that Yinger (1970) gives to that term, because punk seems to be mainly alive at the level of iconography (Brake, 1973; Taylor & Wall, 1976) rather than in its class and economic references. Hall & Jefferson (1973), however, would insist that punk must be explained as part of an economic system, since, in their view, it must be a response of working class youths to external political conditions. As should be clear by now, I am arguing that

there is very little conditioned response about the punks' conduct and much more frequently there is, instead, their determination to condition other people's - including Hall & Jefferson's - responses to them. This is not a fashionable view among subculture theorists because of their typical reluctance to accept that conduct might be principally expressive, and only residually practical after the manner Marx defined as real. But Rom Harré (1979) thinks, for instance, that "in general, for most social forms and at most historical epochs the expressive is dominant over the practical," and, "the system of production is pressed into the service of expression, and does not function autonomously. Hence, it could not be a cause of expressive social forms and practices." So, when Peter Marsh (1977) writes of punk, "It's dole-queue rock, and the only way to really make sense of it is through some awareness of the kinds of lives which the kids who have become punks are leading," I would contend, contrarywise, that a good way to make sense of the lives of the kids is to look hard at what they want to show their onlookers.

### Punks in Public Places

Stone (1975) theorises that a person's appearance simultaneously conveys identity, value, mood, and attitude. A punk therefore would instantly be seen in his "identity" as a punk, who has punk "values", along with a "mood" of deprived nihilism and an "attitude" that society is his enemy. "Reviews" (Stone's term) such as these are

expressed by proprietors of clubs, discos, pubs, and cafes, who bar punks from their premises<sup>11</sup>. However, in streets, squares, parks, bus stations, shops, and other urban public places, punks are merely looked at with alarmed glances that do not make eye contact (though the police are apt to chivy punks along). A punk walking down a street passes through a fine mesh of glances coming from every direction, so his appearance, then, is like a patch of interference in the midst of normal appearances. It is too eye-catching, by design, not to be caught by too many eyes. And as if to control for being so closely attended to, a punk deadens his facial and gestural expressions and affects the same clinical stupidity his music celebrates ("moron" and "vacant" recur in the songs as terms of praise), often walking in the "invisible straightjacket" style of his pogo dancing. This further catches eyes.

But to appear to normals as if they do not understand normal appearances, punks must employ conceptions of proper ritual demeanour sharper than normal, and totally belied, of course, by their own appearances. The punk girl who plaits a tampon into her bright pink hair is carefully profaning herself, so that, going beyond the outer limits of propriety, she does not quite reach the inner limits of illegality. Therefore, though she might be considered to have so far removed herself from concepts of female delicacy as to warrant the anti-honorific "Slag" (a word I have seen painted on motorcycle

jackets of punk girls), the precise distance of the removal is calculated and travelled by her alone.

The stalking ground of punk, then, is the territory between normal appearances and illegal appearances, within which punks profane themselves with an inventiveness that is checked only by the requirement that they can always be labelled punks by one another and by normals. In their chosen stalking ground, punks do achieve an untouchability equal and opposite to high status persons in the same wider culture. The attributions a punk will be subject to, moreover, of stupidity, immorality, sickness, childishness, laziness, unsavouriness, are seized upon, being so wide of the mark (and wide because they hit the very stalking horse of punk that punks construct), as evidence of the stupidity in normal society that was a reason for the taking on of a punk appearance in the first place. (This process does not unfold in time as stages in moral career, but is better seen as a homeostatic system operating at any time.)

Once more, the question arises as to why the conduct of punks should standardize itself into a fashion. Again, the only answer I can give is that for the punk there is safety in numbers, but this "fashioning" of punk is precisely what defuses its revolutionary potential, for punk, as soon as it is recognised in every instance as punk, must become the normal appearance called punk. Punks, then, in spitting on society, spit on themselves

because to be punks they have to betray what they say punk stands for. A real punk, one might argue, will not look like a punk; he will more closely resemble Kim Philby or Richard Nixon. So it is quite in keeping with the punk's election of a stalking ground that does not reach into illegal areas that he should also want to provide himself with the permanent alibi that his doings are punk doings and not his own doings. Punk, for all its profanations, actually respects many aspects of societal order, and the punk must spend his life oscillating between the ignominy of not being noticed and the recognition of being noticed to be ignominious. What is more, the punk's back and forth moral movement faithfully mirrors the same movement of a normal from being anyone to being someone, but at the other side of the line which separates profane from sacred.

The punks I interviewed refused to accept that their appearances constituted a first provocative step in any interaction, and were inclined to complain of what they described as harassment. I think this was because they had arrived at a view of punk not unlike the one above, which only makes those who think punk is dangerous as dangerous as punks are imagined to be. However, now (January 1981) that punk in London is showing a greater interest in Nazi costume and fascist ideas, commentators will once again take its fashion followers seriously, but I do not think they need to, since these latter day punks have chosen to give the

Sieg Heil salute at "Rock against Racism" concerts and to wear National Front insignia precisely because they have identified these as acts that will be taken seriously, and not for the sake of reviving old meanings. (But, of course, it could be argued that that would not prevent a clever organiser bureaucratizing the fashion and then coercing everybody else into following it, as if it were not a fashion but were some divinely guided form of conduct, which is what I think Hitler did, and is certainly what luminaries of the National Front are actively trying to do at present.)

### The Ideology of Punk

Punk ideology, a name I give its declarative moral statements, is found in the songs, in the fanzines, and, sloganized, on walls, T-shirts, and jackets. The first reports of punk, perhaps because they were written by journalists attuned to the political rhetoric of the hippies and perhaps, also, because these journalists were sensitive to those theories of subculture that suggest subcultural members can be grouped in economic and political languages (explaining the fact if not the form of the subculture), tried to foist an anarchist credo on the punks. The punks did actually play with this for a while, in as much as it could be used to give expression to a style of urban despair; but they were never really interested in political theories or in founding an enduring "counter culture", since they said they did not think there was a tomorrow. Their primary interests were

never anything but being punk. Thus, at the same time as the Sex Pistols sang "Anarchy in the UK" punks painted swastikas on their faces, because for a punk, doing is being. But a rough ideology true to the phenomena would go as follows: the present is intolerable and there is no future, so society which believes otherwise is insincere, as well as being, in any case, boring and suffocatingly conformist, and punks, being the only ones who dare see this, are the only realists alive. As I have shown, such an ideology, practised as appearance, is self-validating.

It is worth repeating here that the fashion of punk is of the same order as the fashion of normalcy, and that neither, considered in the terms of either one, can be said to be deeper than the other. Also, both fashions need the other in order to be discernible at all. Perhaps the punks who were mystified as to why they should have seemed provocative had reached the point reached here, that punk and normal are both as empty or as full as each other, but only if punk and normal do not think this.



### Some Conclusions

The following points are incidental to the only conclusion I need to have made by now, that punks are a group of persons who increase their ritual power by adopting a desacralizing fashion, but I list them rather than leave them buried as implications within my narrative:

1. The systematic desecrations practised by punks are a measure of the "give" in their society's system of proprieties. Where there is no give, there would be no room for legal impropriety. (A society without give would be China during its Cultural Revolution or Cambodia under the rule of the Khmer Rouge. A society with a great deal of give would be the Haight Ashbury quarter of San Francisco in the late 1960s.)
2. That punk can come to be the main interest in life of some of its adherents is an indication of the power of the ritual code in a culture that tends to conceive of itself, officially, as productive, rational, and utilitarian.
3. The outrage some punks have been seen to be also indicates the power of the ritual code.
4. Punk is only possible insofar as it is contained. Were it to take over the other side of its dialectic with normalcy, it would be normalcy and therefore,

according to punk ideology, boring.

5. Affiliation to the punk fashion is a deeper affiliation to the prevailing ritual code than affiliation to non-punk forms.

6. The rhetoric of punk does not fuel the necessary organizational engines to change society.

7. Punk, like other visible subcultures, cannot be revolutionary just because it is visible. Testing the limits of the permissible in the way it does can only alter the permissible in permissible ways.

### Nurses

My argument throughout this section is that nurses go after ritual power because they are pursued by contaminants. Thus, they travel in the opposite direction to punks, who pursue the contaminants in order to acquire ritual power.

Nurses bear comparison to punks in other ways besides their unusual concern for contamination and sacralizations. They also wear a costume that immediately identifies them, serving the dual fashion function of simultaneous collection and individuation, and, furthermore, though they may not see it like this, they can find their lives revolving round this costume.

An important apparent difference, that nurses are governed by the formal organisation they belong to, obscures the fact that nursing rhetoric claims for its members a "vocation"<sup>12</sup>. The rhetoric says that nurses are called to their work not by money but quite altruistically by the need of the sick for cure and care. A nurse is encouraged hereby to believe that she works because she is called - as nuns are called to religious orders - and if she believes this, as many of them seem to, she is just as remote from concerns of career and

remuneration as any punk.

An analysis of nurses seen in and through the ritual frame, like the foregoing analysis of punks, gives far less than a total picture but the image it produces does, I think, restore importance to activity that is often overlooked, and in the only way that makes sense of it. Naturally, what I have to say about nurses can only apply to my first-hand knowledge<sup>13</sup>, but there are two reasons why my findings may not be completely bounded by the setting I researched. Firstly, many of the nurses I worked alongside had experience on other wards, and felt that the one where I was working was typical. Then, the fact that nursing activities are extremely standardized argues against the possibility of my having happened into an extremely atypical ward.

A punk, of course, must find his stage in the interstices of formal organizations, usually in the streets, but a nurse can only work within a hospital<sup>14</sup>. Since hospitals are institutions that invest themselves with ritual authority (Freidson (1970) says "the hospital is succeeding the church and the parliament as the archetypal institution of Western culture."), nurses enjoy elevated status simply by being associated with them. Nurses, moreover, are members of a medical profession that a polemicist such as Illich (1976) can argue is in the business of "appropriating health" by reinterpreting human conduct in the rhetoric of sickness and cure, for

the purpose of colonialisng passive citizens. So in this way too nurses can share in the overhigh ritual status of healers that is acquired, Freidson (1970) says, by extending medical jurisdiction "far wider than its demonstrable capacity to 'cure'." Thus, although my analysis is only meant to show that nurses procure ritual power to prevent their contamination, it can be seen that they begin with more than they perhaps might deserve. Instances of their extreme care with regard to pollutants, from this perspective that defines the medical profession as being ritually self-serving, therefore will be more readily understood.

Within the hospital, it is the nurse whom the patient meets more than any other staff person, so it is mainly in her person that hospitals define themselves for patients. However, the nurse does not nurse as a typist types or a seamstress sews; somehow all her conduct, instrumental, expressive, or even role-distanced, must look like nursing conduct. She is not a worker like other workers, and this difference is well pointed up by the title of Ruth Pomeranz's (1973) book on student nurses: The Lady Apprentices. Nurses in hospitals, then, are persons such as do not exist anywhere else, whose very labour is conduct and whose conduct for that reason can be their work, and their conduct must conform to prevailing ideals of the nurse<sup>15</sup>.

Now I shall simply list the possible profanations

met by the working nurse - at least in the setting I researched - together with details of how these are risen above. Then I review some of the nursing literature in order to broaden the narrative and to show the conceptual utility of the ritual frame. A more general discussion of ritual and nursing follows that, before the brief closing section entitled "Nameless Interaction". The purpose throughout, as it was in the punks section of this chapter, is to expose the ritual code by exploring relevant stalking grounds, staying close to the phenomena rather than elaborating theory. Naturally, as I argued in Chapter I, describing and theorizing can be inseparable modes of apprehending reality, so inevitably the reader will keep coming across passages of high generality that in the interests of continued "rolling analysis" are left where they are as intellectual outcrops and not brought together as the foundations for a verbal monument. So it is my principal intention in this chapter to strongly make the point that ritual conduct in the sense Goffman gives to it is more than a heuristic expedient, and I make this point by concentrating on how two apparently dissimilar groups of persons concern themselves with ritual power. In Chapter V I shall have more to say about ritual power, and in Part Three I proceed to a higher level of abstraction, using there the very necessity of maintaining narrative coherence to verbally create realities that ought to be tested, in the way advocated in Chapter I, against the reader's experience. (As in the punk section, many of the

profanations listed below can only make sense to members of the wider culture to which both the nurses and punks belong.)

#### Profanations by Persons

1. Nurses work in the same setting as less skilled workers like cleaners, domestics, and porters. Continually rubbing up against menials, nurses prevent anything rubbing off on them by keeping contacts to a minimum.

If unskilled staff are talked to familiarly, it is to make the point that the nurse is not the low kind of person who would keep her distance from the low. The making of this point, of course, increases the distance for the parties if they know it to be the point being made, as the nurse, at least, always does.

2. High ranking nurses are locked into routines that are effortlessly performed by lower ranks, and so the routines raise the status of the latter while reducing that of the former.<sup>16</sup> It consequently behoves a novice to be less skilful than her senior; a show of evidently superior skill would be tantamount to insolence. In her turn, the senior nurse will try to perform with practised dexterity. So both nurses try not to let their status differences disappear into identical routines - which would be a mutual contamination - and work the routines in order that the differences appear to arise out of them.

3. There were no deaths on the ward I studied, but nurses in geriatric wards frequently handle corpses.

Nurses rely heavily on the vocational account of their work when discussing death. A nurse in this account is the opposite of a person who makes money by washing and wrapping dead bodies: she is the nearest possible human stand-in for an angel of mercy.

4. Agonised patients doubly insult a nurse because they show the medical profession to be ineffective and also, by their complete self-involvement, interactionally offend in depriving the nurse of a purchase for reciprocal interaction status that can then be used to talk the patient out of his conduct of moaning and screaming. Nurses duly avoid agonised patients. Paralysed patients also offend by not being able to make requisite deference signs with their bodies and limbs. This offence is usually overglossed by the nurse, in her interactions with the paralysed, carrying on a monologue in the first-person plural in which the silent partner is spoken for as if he could not conceivably offend. (Telles (1980) observes in this connection that, "the effort required on the part of critically ill patients to manage their failing and unpredictable bodies leads to improper behaviour, such as urinating in bed. Patients sometimes apologise for this, and staff typically react with understanding, by indicating that, given the patient's conditions, such delicts are excusable." Here one can see that patients try hard, and are expected to by the



nurse, not to be contaminative,)

5. Patients who force nurses to clean up after them whether because their wounds have bled or because they have lost control of their bowels are never accorded full interaction status unless the cleaning is done with such bravura that the nurse seems no longer to be wiping up blood and shit, but rather bringing off a complicated trick. Secure in her role of medical magician she can then afford to trade banter with the patient in question, the contaminative details having been pushed out of a frame that now contains only her cheerful and dedicated skill.

6. When nurses received the day's notes in the sister's office or the treatment room, the sister would use euphemisms for the words arse, genitals, penis, and urine, calling these, respectively, "bottie", "bits and pieces", "waterworks", and "wee". At first, I thought this was because of my presence, but nurses I later befriended assured me that the euphemisms were routine. Since these euphemisms are somewhat infantile, I suggest their purpose may be to unsex aspects of male patients' bodies that otherwise could be seen as contaminative.

#### Profaning Relations to Persons

1. Nurses touch the flesh of opposite-sex strangers quite often, for instance when they shave or wash a

face, or when they bath a patient, or when they dress him, or when they attend to his wounds, drips, or catheter. In the Urology ward these strangers were old and unattractive for the most part, and contact with them was "selfless" indeed, a phrase that in the ritual idiom can only mean not to do with a presumed real self who would think well enough of herself to recoil from such contact.

Nurses did not surround their touchings of patients' sexual organs with the taboos described, in connection to vaginal examinations, by Emerson (1963) and by Henslin & Biggs (1978), though during these touchings breath is bated on both sides. However, nurses are very careful not to skimp operations in the taboo areas of the body, as carrying these out with unsullied demeanour is a test of nursing calibre, which the true nurse passes because true nurses are sacred enough not to be touched by these sorts of touchings. Nursing logic has it, then, that a nurse rises above profanations, because she has a calling, but equally well it could be said that a nurse has a calling so that she can rise above profanations.

2. Patients are always being lifted: up their beds so they can eat, or onto their sides to prevent bedsores, or out of bed into chairs and onto commodes, or into and out of baths, or they are lifted simply by being supported in gentle exercising walks up and down the ward. Since many patients are very weak or are paralysed, the work

is heavy. Young girls find themselves bearing with care and respect burdens strong men would find tiring and, especially in geriatric wards, much of the daily round is an endless humping of ageing flesh. So here, in addition to contaminative contact, there is the contamination of weight that ever threatens to reduce the nurse to the role of labourer. From this role she only really escapes by looking like the demure young female she usually is.

3. Some contacts between nurses and patients take the form of intimate services done by the former for the latter. (These will include measuring blood pressures, injecting drugs, administering suppositories, taking temperatures, and wiping bottoms.) The term intimate, used of a relationship, normally, of course, denotes a pair of persons who love each other, but nurses are being intimate with strangers, so against this they must arm themselves with brisk, functional behaviour designed to look impersonal. The nurse then keeps her ritual self's virginity by approximating herself to an automaton in contexts of intimacy and may like some prostitutes give to patients a look of being withheld.

4. Nurses cede medical authority to housemen and consultants. They give her orders, and she must do as she is told. This desacralization of her judgement is compounded by the unstated requirement that, doing as she is told, she must not look as though that is what

she is doing. Interestingly, both Katz (1969) and Mauksch (1972) refer to this physician-nurse relationship as a caste relationship closely resembling the nineteenth-century relation of Southern whites to blacks, and the differentiation is reinforced by the gender division of male physician over female nurse. In response, nurses try to look as though they have absolute confidence in this system of their subordination, and this is the only possible way they can save themselves from looking as if there is another possible system, for expressed criticality would imply that they felt demeaned. Theirs is the desperate strategy of decreasing the offence that is done them by accepting it as if it were a compliment.

5. The nurse works as a waitress when she serves drinks and meals to patients and when she afterwards clears up the dirty cutlery and crockery. On the Urology ward patients were required to drink large quantities of liquid to irrigate their bladders, so here the nurses had the additional and frequent waitress duty of topping up patients' measured water jugs. The waitress role was often medicalized by the nurses' technique of showing a "professional" interest in food and liquid consumed, and indeed a nurse was expected to report refusals to consume, as on the ward, these were medical events.

But one should not forget that a nurse's waitress offices helps her execute her "bedside role", deprived of which, Malone et al (1965) found, she feels less of

nurse than she would like to be. Possibly the bedside role is a harkening back to earlier times, if, as Brown (1966) suggests, the model of nursing, for most nurses, is borrowed from the private sphere. Naturally, as Brown points out, the more waitress duties are devolved onto aides by nurses seeking to upgrade their professional status, the less bedside nursing is possible for nurses. Here the nurse, as in so many of her instrumental functions, is caught between the virtual self of a profaning activity and the ideal self of an aspired-after role.

6. The nurse also waits on the sister who is in charge of her ward and, more abstractly, on the ward itself, running errands to the "path lab" and the laundry in the outer hospital, as well as keeping various supplies in good order, none of these activities drawing on specifically medical expertise. In recognition of this demeaning "waiting", it is the practice to only send junior nurses on errands. Selection for such jobs is a means also of telling the nurse that the break in routine that she is being allowed signifies her inability to yet take routine in her stride.

### Profaning Substances

One afternoon I was shown round his geriatric ward by a Charge Nurse who had joined me while I was drinking coffee in the canteen. The smell, of disinfectant and shit combined, was one to gag on. At the end of the tour, the Charge Nurse asked me this rhetorical question:

"What other profession handles untreated sewage?" Nurses are the only persons in Anglo-American culture under an obligation to take care of the excretory functions of strangers, yet neither do they usually define themselves by this function, and nor are they defined by it. They "rise above it" because it really is for them "unmentionable", and in any case someone has to do it, and it might be that that someone is a better person than one who would, for example, rather touch nothing less sterile than the keys of a cash register.

Not only raw sewage must be handled but so must dirty laundry and soiled bandages and dressings, and in Britain, delapidated conditions and inadequate equipment<sup>17</sup> can be felt to further defile the nurse. The only way she can salvage self-respect for working with filth in inadequate conditions is to think of herself as being the rare person with sufficient inner worth to overcome these.

Usually hospital wards are never free of disquieting sights and smells - that the analyst cannot call "bad" without pre-empting his conclusion - yet, as the Goncourt brothers wrote on 18th December 1860, after a visit to M Velpan's ward at the Hopital de la Charite in Paris: "The horror of it all is ... well covered with white sheets, cleanliness, neatness, and silence" (Goncourt & Goncourt, 1962). The Goncourts persisted in studying their ward so as to write their realistic

novel Soeur Philomene, and they were particularly affected by the smell: "It is horrible, that hospital smell that follows you around. I do not know if it is real or imaginary, but you constantly feel the need to wash your hands" (27 December 1860) and, the day before that diary entry, "Melancholy floated within us, a breath of hospital air which we had absorbed."

It is against nursing regulations for a nurse to odorize herself but she reacts to smells by constantly deodorizing, which in practice involves a slight odorization with anti-septic aromas<sup>18</sup>. Her most noticeable reaction to other unpleasant conditions is one of not appearing to notice them, as if they are not only beneath her in fact but as if it is also beneath her to act as if they are beneath her. Once again it is the contaminants that allow the equal and opposite compensation of conduct whose ritual power would needs be less without it.

### Profaning Labour

There are four ways in which nursing conduct considered as labour is a kind of labour usually reserved for low status workers:

1. Heavy lifting. This I have already described in its connection to contaminative body contact.
2. Repetitiveness. Bed-making, meal and drink serving, the taking of temperatures and blood pressures, bathing patients, emptying catheter bags, and so on are performed

in the same way every day, and comprise much of the day's work. In an effort to square this with an image of the nurse as a woman sensitively oriented to patients whose grosser wants are attended by domestics, nursing rhetoric is forced to overlay the instrumentality of these tasks with the idea that their performance is really a ruse by which nurses gain medical information about the unsuspecting patient.

3. Triviality. From my first day on the ward, I was well able to carry out very nearly all the tasks of my fellow trained nurses, and this was not thought remarkable. Student and pupil nurses for whom the triviality is putatively decontaminated by being defined as a necessary part of "training" often see through this definition, but not to its sacralizing purpose as described here.

4. Long hours. Not only do nurses work long hours but they work these hours in shifts that are often "unsocial", and they must, of course, work them in the single context of a ward, without remission. The only way to work long hours as if this working is not a reflection on one's status is to do so uncomplainingly. And very few nurses complain about the hours. Characteristically, this absence of complaint like many other instances of nursing reticence, is often cited as signifying no cause for it. By my analysis it could better signify so great a cause that its expression would hopelessly desacralize the nurse. (Not many nurses complain about their low pay



either. The argument here is that, if nurses were given more money, patients would have to go short. So a good nurse cannot agitate too much about money. Similarly, if a nurse were to work shorter hours, patients again would suffer. So the profanation of low income can be overcome by pretending it is a sacrifice, and not an injustice, for she who sacrifices is the more by the extent of the sacrifice.)

#### General Responses to Profanations in General

I have described how nurses neutralize their profanations not only by silently conducting themselves as if they were enhanced by their overcoming of these profanations but also by their acting as if nothing difficult had to be overcome.

The main weapon a nurse wields against contamination is her uncontaminated appearance. It is not surprising, therefore, that defects in the highly prescribed costume, make-up, and demeanour of a nurse should induce severe sanctions from her superiors, as if each nurse - every one of them the embodied persona of a "good nurse" - must be made proof against filth that would attack nurses in general the instant it gained ground on one in particular.

For example, the Senior Nursing Officer of the section of the hospital containing the Urology ward where I worked was said to "pounce" on nurses - who might be quite unknown to her - if she caught them in slip-on instead

of lace-up shoes. This conduct can be interpreted easily if one remembers that laces are traditional, look functional, and need tying (so showing that the wearer is not lazy). A slip-on shoe is obviously the "wrong" image - if my image of a good nurse is the right one.

Fine prescription of appearance also fixates on ornaments, which are forbidden, with the exception of wedding rings, presumably because these rings are tie-signs (Goffman 1971) before they are jewellery. Sleepers may be worn in pierced ears if they are gold, which is of course hygienic, though it also may be thought that a less precious metal would cheapen the nurse appearance. Make-up is absolutely forbidden, as is nail varnish, and hair, if long, must be worn up. The same fineness of prescription applies to all nurses in Britain and the USA, though there are slight regional differences in actual uniform.

There is no doubting that failure to conform to the regulations of appearance is read as a serious lapse, and thus the smoothness of a nurse's outer shell is taken as a deep indication of her fitness for the calling. One crack, furthermore, is sufficient to let in contaminations that would profane the calling as a whole. And just in case the off-duty nurse would be tempted to desacralize herself, the "International Code of Nursing Ethics" tells her that "the nurse in private life adheres

to standards of personal ethics which reflect credit upon the profession." (Extracts from this code are given to every nurse on her being employed at the hospital where I researched.)

#### Other Research on Nurses that Bears on Aspects of Ritual Conduct

Mauksch (1966) observes that the nurse alone of all health-care workers has continuous contact with patients. For this reason the demand on her for nurselike comportment - demure, efficient, cheerful - is heavy, and she does not have time to develop a different style of conduct. Basing his research on interviews with nurses, Skipper (1965) says that, contrary to received opinion, the nurse role combines what he calls instrumental and expressive functions. In other words, by discerning aspects of her conduct as purely expressive, Skipper confirms my view of the nurse as one who has to look like a nurse before she can nurse. Schulman (1958) interestingly calls nurses "mother surrogates" but by 1972 (Schulman, 1972) he has decided that patients less strongly desire to be mothered even if their nurses could reverse their process of drift toward increasingly technical equipment. Schulman's nurses may not be typical, however, in this country, where there is not a flow but only a trickle of modern machinery into hospital wards.

Glaser and Strauss (1965), in their study of Californian hospital wards, note that an important nurse function is to preserve the "sentimental order"

of the ward, and Victoria Wilson (1971), from a feminist point of view, bemoans the fact that in the doctor-nurse-patient triad it is the nurse who is expected to exhibit an impossible mixture of responsibility, initiative, and passivity, with the doctor, as Wilson puts it, "on top". As far as being cheerful goes, Glaser and Strauss (1965) define an unexpected chore nurses might have to take on: "If the patient's morale is good ... he becomes the pacesetter for the morale of the ward, for it would not do for a nurse to be less cheerful than a patient. Nurses are literally forced to 'one-up' the patient by having higher morale" (p 245). So nurses must lead the expression of approved attitudes to sickness or else lose their medical authority, which often, Freidson (1970) says, "teeters between glory and ruin, and is prone to claim its glory because of the risk of ruin rather than because of its accomplishment" (p 170). Here again, it can be seen that nurses are obliged to use forms of conduct that are more easily explained by reference to their presumed ritual power than to their official instrumental tasks.

In the ward, then, patients can come to be seen by nurses as audiences for performances. Along these lines Wessen (1958) says: "For hospital people, the patients are not so much a part of their social system, as a vital reference group in the midst of which the personnel operate, which they serve, and toward which they orient many of their actions and attitudes." And Emerson (1963)

in California describes a phenomenon very similar to one I often observed: "Everyone has a special manner of talking to patients - a polished extroverted, well enunciated, friendly impersonality" (p 79). This "impersonality", that I have interpreted as a flight into ideal role, is called a "coping mechanism" by Coombs and Goldman (1973) in their study of an Intensive Care Unit; there it takes the forms of humour, escape into tasks, over-use of technical language, and rationalization.

Turning from patients to the doctor and the consultant, a nurse finds herself suddenly cast in the role of votary that formerly she required the patient to play in relation to her. Many consultants are said by the nurses (those who talked to me) to think of themselves as "gods" and their power is commensurately great even over medical students whom Becker et al (1961) report as judging consultants by how well they treated students, "that is, according to how little they take advantage of their opportunity to embarrass or humiliate students" (p 290). But many consultants, Emerson (1963) says, have merely learned "to perform the miracle of walking on the waters by stepping on the stones hidden beneath the surface" (p 340), and Goldie (1976) has found that psychiatrists who, for example, imbue routine activities such as diagnosis "with a certain mystery and mystique, calling for 'intuition', 'accumulated experience', and 'clinical judgement', can by claiming to set such

activities above the comprehension of the non-medical staff ... maintain the subordination of the latter." Mystification is also practised when a patient dies unexpectedly, for Sudnow (1967) notes that doctors always redefine his medical history so that death can become "an outcome of dying." All this is to suggest that the analogous ritual power doctors and consultants have to nurses that nurses have to patients is, no more than is that of nurses, not effortlessly created as a by-product of superior scientific knowledge, but instead accomplished by purely ritualizing conduct.

#### Ritual Power from a Clockwork System

Nurses' decontamination conduct gives new sense to Robert Wilson's (1965) assertion that "ill persons have to learn how to be patients, for being sick and performing adeptly in the role of hospital patient are not at all the same thing." Being a patient in many cases means being as uncontaminative as possible, and this theme, that the patient needs to take care with a nurse if he wants her to take care of him, recurs in many studies. Thus, Emerson (1963) says that "patients should minimize their requests and not treat nurses as servants. If the ideal patient does occasionally ask for something, it should be done in an 'ask-a-favour style'" (p 77), and Tagliacozzo & Mauksch (1972) found that most paying patients they interviewed had quickly learnt that nurses expect co-operation, respect, and consideration. Freidson (1970), who thinks "the community

is not truly served" when service to citizens is defined by a profession, notes that the sick citizen, giving himself into the care of medical persons, "is expected to take a role which is akin to that of a house pet or a child" (p 355). Sudnow (1967), moreover, found that "every effort was made" to classify patients so that they could be treated in "organisationally routine ways" (p 172) and Zborowski (1969) established that, though expressions of pain vary from culture to culture, these are sanctioned if they do not conform to the nurse's cultural expectations.

Glaser and Strauss (1964) even link the degree to which the patients' deaths grieve nurses to patients' social worth in terms of the culturally valued attributes of youth, talent, and money and Rosenhan's (1978) experiment of placing nine sane persons in psychiatric hospitals, with instructions to act sane, proves the point - that patients are only honorary persons - by showing that not one was assumed by nurses to be sane - for the reason that they were "patients". According to Tagliacozzo (1965), furthermore, "good patients" try to "save the bell", hiding their real problems "behind a cloak of conformity". And the lot of patients contaminating nurses by not conforming to the definition of a good patient is personal destruction, as Emerson (1963) discovered: "When a patient is clamoring to be treated like a person he is bucking the system; anyone bucking the system is most likely defined as emotionally disturbed and therefore not

entitled to be treated as a person" (p 83). Telles (1980) reports, in this connection: "In ICU, we observe force, subtle or blunt, used against the patients to maintain their well demeanored appearance by eliminating their ability to present themselves in other ways. Nurses spoonfed them to prevent their spilling of food or drink onto their bedclothes. Their hands are tied to prevent their movement, bedsheets are tied to rails to prevent nudity, and their incontinence is contained by catheters. When a patient began shouting at random, the resident commented to the nurse that they may "have to kick her out in spite of her condition because we can't tolerate that kind of noise here."

Patients, being the source of so many contaminations, prevent nurses relaxing, except when unobserved in what Rose<sup>n</sup>gren & Devault (1963) call "interstitial areas"; here "the most blunt questions can be asked without prestige and esteem becoming serious considerations." Coser (1961) suggests that "the determination of who can hide from whom may be as essential to the workings of a social system as determination of who has power over whom." In a ward, patients - even if they sleep or refuse eye contact - can hide from no one (it would be unthinkable, for instance, for a patient to draw the curtains round his bed), while nurses can hide only for short periods from their sister, and the sister can hide from everybody but not for too long. Unable to hide from one another, persons in a ward, therefore, fall



into stereotypical roles which when played well make the place go like "clockwork", which is a word used by nurses as superlative praise of a ward's organization. Those very few patients who do not know their place in a ward are "disturbed", if only because only they seem unaware of the kinds of places to which disturbed persons are sent. So, in a clockwork system, human conduct that is not geared to it cannot be countenanced, and those who constitute the main parts of the system - the nurses - must be in proper working order. A ladder in a stocking, a hint of eye shadow, a single bloodstain on a blue cotton dress, an obscene word playing on the lips, a slouching walk, a coquettish strut, too loud a laugh, all these flaws in the ideal nurse can be seen, every one, as the first cracks of ultimate fissures through which would pour all the pain, disease, and filth of the world. The shell of a nurse needs to be armour and a nurse has ritual power to the degree that she and others see her armour as being as natural as her skin.

Of course, my argument should be that a nurse is nothing but her armour, because nurses play what Elizabeth Burns (1972) describes as "total roles". Players of total roles, very much less than other role players, practise the role distancing that Goffman (1972) has argued is a ubiquitous humanizing social strategy. Nurses in this respect are identical to Gonos's (1976) go-go dancers, and of the context of the ward can be said exactly what Gonos says of a go-go dancer's platform:

... the present frame for go-go dancing is essentially non-dissociative in that no character is created for the dancer to step in to. Hence, what is perceived as the dancer's "true self" remains inextricably linked to the meanings of the activities involved in her performance.

(p 201-2)

Of nursing as of go-go dancing, it is true to say that:

... its [go-go dancing's] audience is inclined to understand the action as self-expressive and further, that the social meanings carried on in its performance will be attached to the self of the dancer by the audience, and appropriated as part of her self-conception.

(p 209)

... in the go-go frame, self, role, and gender become concurrent determinants, bound up together in the action, a particularly insidious identificatory formula.

(p 210)

A first possibility is that these women sense no distances from their roles as dancers, that is, that their activities as dancers near perfectly match their ideal images of themselves.

(p 215)

Gonos's dancers, like nurses, are seen to be through and through what they appear to be. That is, underneath the costume and the conduct of a nurse should be some embryonic proto-nurse, and this it is that animates the rhetoric of "calling" and "vocation", for only what is already there can be summoned. Nursing, then, is not any job, but is a way of life, and this way of life entails doing the job of living a way of life, a double yoke, usually worn with no less apparent insouciance than the white paper hats nurses must pin into their hair.

But role-distancing practices do increase up the nursing hierarchy; sisters tend to be looked toward as

persons, to see how they will play their role, and senior nursing officers assured me that management was "all personalities". Besides the usual reason, of senior persons having more personal autonomy, it can be appreciated that the further from a ward a nurse rises, the less pressing is her need to self-sacralize, the reason being that a senior nurse can acquire ritual power from her seniority whereas the ward nurse only ever stands to lose hers. But in friendly wards, described to me as those in which "the kettle is always on," nurses nevertheless sometimes co-operate to get the work done so as to leave time for relaxation and sociability. "When the hierarchy arrives" (as it was put to me), cups of tea are poured down the sink and informality vanishes. What had been going on, however, was not role distance as Goffman defines it, but a kind of role suspension.

A more transient type of role suspension is laughter, when a person becomes a being who appears to be choking on an unassimilable concept, but it should not be thought that in a "clockwork" ward laughter is not the sound of some of its gears meshing. Patients, for example, nervously engage one another in jocular talk which, as Coser (1965) points out, relates to the anxieties of both having to adjust to alien and rigid routines (patients are made to get up two or three hours earlier than the rest of the population, so as to fit into nurses' shift systems) and having to submit to unchallengable authority. Emerson (1963) actually says that humour attaches to

recurrent situations when, in telegraphed form, it is used primarily to repair indignities. One such recurrent situation in the Urology ward was the emptying of plastic catheter bags. The urine contained in these had to be measured then and there at the bedside so that a new figure could be entered on the patient's fluid chart. Invariably jokes would cluster around this activity, but not quite in the way Coser sees as containing an unresolvable conflict. Structurally, the humour bracketed the bags as being too funny to be taken seriously by nurse or patient, yet, since the colour of the urine clearly indicated the degree of recovery from an operation, the bags were serious indeed. The joking thus served to bring their prognostic significance back into the realm of routine as well as to trivialise the contaminative potential of the urine by ridiculing it. So here joking was essentially decontaminative, both of potentially threatening significations and of a polluting substance. The clockwork needed the laughter as lubrication to prevent its jamming.

Of course, no one ever laughs at a nurse, but frequently patients are used as butts. For instance, messy lockers would occasion huge laughter from the nurse opening their doors, at which others would gather round the laughing nurse to swell the mirth. Culprits usually grinned sheepishly as their pathetic attempts at anarchy were mocked out of court. Once again, the clockwork performed its waste disposal function -

grinding contaminations to nothing - so that the nurse could look like herself.

### Nameless Interaction

Because their shifts do not often coincide for long, because they frequently change wards, and because all their interactions are always being interrupted by the demands of other persons or tasks, nurses do not get to know one another very well. The impersonal cast of ward life is further ensured by the taboo on mere sociability as a form of nurse interaction. First-names are used without warmth, between nurses who have worked together for relatively long periods, but otherwise even same-rank nurses in the presence of patients or sisters will attract one another's attention with the call "Nurse!" Sisters are always addressed as Sister by all nurses. Patients are called "Mr," their names not usually easily associated with their faces since patients like nurses are coming and going continually. (It is very common for a nurse to flick her eyes to a patient's bedhead where his name is displayed before she addresses him as if she had known his name all along; she can also read his name on the plastic bracelet he must wear even in the bath.) The use of "Mr" as an honorific is so routine that on the Urology ward - while I was there - a Brigadier and two Reverends were also always called Mr and nurses complain good-naturedly about getting patients' names mixed up, as if this is inevitable. People in the environment of nameless interaction that is a ward, then, are unusually

sociological beings, easily substituted for one another.

On the ward, nameless men and women confront one another as members of very broad categories of human classification (this is the point Gonos makes with regard to the meeting of go-go dancer and her customer), and neither nurse nor patient seems uncomfortable about this. It is fascinating to quote Simmel (1971) on the subject of nameless interaction: "The most diverse personalities can engage in it and all individual differences appear to be of no importance." Here Simmel is speaking of prostitution, adding that its debasement "lies in the fact that the most personal possession of a woman, her area of greatest reserve, is considered equivalent to the most neutral value of all [money]." So the caring nurse, not only by the profanations I have listed but also by virtue of the structural impersonality of her situation runs a risk there too of debasement, and it is in just those activities where this kind of debasement is most possible that her conduct is most prescribed. The bathing of patients, for example, is carried out in a routinized sequence (one that is in fact a "practical" in the examinations a pupil nurse must pass before becoming a qualified State-Enrolled Nurse). So in nameless interaction there may be found routines prescribed to the degree that the interactions are nameless, and these are passages of frozen ritual conduct embedded in an improvising stream of behaviour always alive to conditions of sacrality and contamination.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

I have described some of the ways nurses cope with profanations by persons, substances, and labour, and I have shown how nurses are driven into a "pure nurse" image that fits into the organization of ward life like a figure in a clockwork scenario. Throughout, I have argued that the nurse becomes as she is in response to a variety of contaminants that, if she did not act "nurseness" to the hilt, could so contaminate her as to stop her being a proper person of any description. However, her working amongst these contaminants in her fresh, clean uniform and with a cheerful, brisk demeanour, suggests that, even more than her being equal to pollutants, the nurse is above them. And it is to the degree that she is above these pollutants, which her calling brings her into touch with, that, I contend, she has ritual power greater than she would have as a non-nurse. Perhaps, in its way, this is as great as that of punks, who, as has been shown, achieve their ritual power by seeking out pollutants just as if it was the ritual power that overcame self-desacralisations, whereas, for them as it is for the nurses, it is the "overcoming", by simply maintaining certain appearances, that brings into being the greater than normal ritual power. Thus ritual power can be created in interaction by conduct alone, and is by no means an invariant quantity of ritualness.

In the next chapter, I shall consider how conduct in general is either fashionable or unfashionable, and I shall draw the conclusion that ritual power - as it certainly does for nurses and punks - accrues to fashionable behaviour.



## Notes

- 1 Sociologists who have addressed the topic of fashion head-on are few and far between, but the following have had stimulating thoughts on the subject (usually conjectural): Roland Barthes, Herbert Blumer, Rene Konig, A L Kroeber, Robert Park, Edward Sapir, Georg Simmel, William Graham Sumner, Gabriel Tarde, W I Thomas, and Thorstein Veblen.
- 2 Robinson (1958) is even moved to personify fashion as "she".
- 3 Sometimes, in pre-revolutionary France for instance, even the wearing of certain materials (such as silk) by some categories of persons (peasants) has been forbidden by law.
- 4 Anscombe (1978) assembles a number of song lyrics and newspaper items and photographs into a punk manifesto; Hennessy (1978) reports punk by comparing photographs of punks with photographs of "primitive" tribes; and Coon (1977) supplies documentary details of many early punk rock groups. All these sources give an undisciplined rendition of the punk phenomena which, longer than most youth fashions, still, at the time of writing, 1981, retains its integrity enough to prevent itself from being treated with respect in the press and on television. Though punk is British in origin, there are punks now in New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, and Paris. Los Angeles punks have only a loose orientation to "punkness" while New York punks have adopted the sado-masochistic fetish ornamentation (leather, straps, chains, studded belts, and so on) more enthusiastically than other punks and therefore are perceived as sexually dangerous to boot.
- 5 The data on which this analysis is based is of an impressionistic kind, being acquired through (1) interviews with punks and groups of punks, (2) some twelve months of weekly or twice weekly "passing encounters" with the six members of a loose group of punks in Bath, (3) some twenty

attendances at punk rock concerts in the West Country and in London (once in the capacity of "Security" working for the promoter), (4) a few visits to punk shops in London, Bristol, and Birmingham, (5) the scrutiny of any punks I happened across at any time, (6) listening to many hours of punk music, (7) reading journalistic punk coverage in publications ranging from the Sunday Times to the New Musical Express. Aside from the concerts, the only large gathering of punks that I attended was the funeral of one of the Bath group, who had been stabbed to death in a back street.

- 6 Statements like "most punks" must be read with extreme caution as being conveniences of style to enable an exposition that were it so fastidious to hedge every generalisation with caveats would comprise very little else but caveats.
- 7 Bormann (1972) speaks of fantasy-chaining as follows:  
"People would grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, laugh, forget their self-consciousness. The tone of the meeting, often tense and quiet prior to the dramatising, would become lively, animated, and boisterous, the chaining process, involving both verbal and nonverbal communication, indicating participation in the drama."
- 8 Bell (1947) has these pertinent thoughts about safety-pins: "Crude but recognisable safety-pins can be found at a very early period of history; at this stage the thing is both useful and ornamental, being frequently made of bronze or gold. It has subsequently developed in both directions; first into the conspicuous broach which commonly has no safety guard, secondly into the very practical safety-pin; this latter is hidden away from public gaze, and to wear it upon the person as a fastening to the dress is thought very ignominious."
- 9 McLaren who discovered the Sex Pistols while managing a sex shop in the Kings Road of London, now manages a group

called Bow Wow Wow. Still an innovator, he will not issue their music on 45 r p m records, but sells tape cassettes with three songs on each side. This way he maintains the exclusivity of his product from the "air play" that is thought indispensable to making a record a hit. (With the Sex Pistols, he used obscenity to ensure their records were banned; but without air play, they still made the Number One slot.)

10 Bill Grundy, of the BBC programme "Nationwide", held responsible for the swearing of the Sex Pistols during an interview, was actually suspended by the BBC for a period of three weeks.

11 In fantasy-chaining interviews, punks vied with one another about how many public establishments they were banned from. Some Bath punks had tallied these very exactly, which would indicate that their score was at least one measure of punkness. A good score was in the region of 20-30 for a town whose population is under 100,000.

12 The rhetoric of "vocation" is not unanimously espoused by nurses, a proportion of whom are members of unions. Union members tend to promote themselves as workers like any other workers, but they are less numerous than members of the Royal College of Nursing, the nurses' main professionalising body.

13 This analysis is derived from data collected over a three-week period during which I carried out participant observation in a male Urology ward, where I was permitted to work as a Nursing Auxiliary. Nurses are not often studied by sociologists in their place of work; usually they are given questionnaires to fill in or are interviewed when off the ward. Notable exceptions to this rule, in Britain, are some of the accounts in Davis & Horobin's (1977) Medical Encounters and, in America, the research by Glaser & Strauss and Julius Roth as well as by Coser (1962), Emerson (1963), Sudnow (1967), and Telles (1980).

The Urology ward was a long room with twelve beds down

each side. It had a day-room off to one side at the far end, and offices, bathrooms, and so on flanked the narrow corridor that led into the ward proper. A ward like this, still called a "Nightingale Ward", is aptly described by Stelling & Bucher (1972) as a "fishbowl".

14 Obviously, peripatetic nurses like District Nurses are not ecologically contained by a hospital organisation, but they are as tightly contained by the organisation of health and care within which they operate.

15 The Committee on Nursing (1972) summarises very many popular conceptions of the nurse, but then goes on to minimise the role these play in her life.

16 It might be thought that I am using status as another word for the phrase "ritual power". This is true up to a point. Status, however, carries too many connotations of being fixed and of having been conferred from outside. Ritual power, on the other hand, being a form of power, is something that can increase or decrease, and, being ritual, in its essence is connected to that part of persons which resists - but does not forbid - translation into formal social terms. Ritual power, unlike status, can be won or lost at any time, and must be continually maintained through conduct. To explain further: saying a sister is superior to a staff nurse because she has a higher rank begs the question of wherein lies that superiority, because it is far more than a formal convenience of organisation. The superiority issues not from appurtenances of rank but from what the rank supposes merits rank, and ritual power is ritual power so long as persons are supposed to be beings who are analytically separable from their multifarious appearances. Later on I come close to saying that all that can be separated is the actual life of a person, and, therefore, that it is life that is respected, though some lives are treated as more valuable than others.

17 On the Urology ward, the paint in the bathrooms, toilets,

store rooms, and kitchen was flaking off the walls. Portable commodes were substituted for the wheelchairs that cost too much to buy. And so on. These environmental shortcomings were all too easily defined by nurses as signifying societal indifference to the welfare of the sick, and, by extension, to those who nurse the sick.

18 Largey & Watson (1972) make the point that the language of odour is often used as a moral calculus. Bad behaviour stinks. Ritually lucky people come up smelling of roses. From this perspective good nurses will have to smell nice.

19 I am avoiding calling these stylized forms of interaction by the name "ritual" as do Sudnow (1967) and Mauksch (1966) because in this thesis I want to stress the idea that ritual conduct is far from being the enactment of automatic deference routines and more often is behaviour that in closely recognizing possibilities of sacralization and contamination is especially constructed by persons. But it is possible that ritualized (in the sense only of routinized) conduct will arise where the contact is between ritual selves who neither of them want to make a ritual contact, and here it would be more appropriate to call it de-ritualized.

## CHAPTER V

### FASHIONABLE RITUAL

In this chapter I lead up to the idea that ritual power not only can be acquired by systematic orientations to societal pollution codes, as I have shown in Chapter IV, but, more commonly, derives from (and is) the interactional phenomenon "presence" as this is understood in the theatre.

Presence is not a mysterious quality that some people have more of than others; it is nothing else but self-definition by acts, expressions, and words. When the definition is sharp and a person is very clear to other persons in interaction, I say that he is possessed, but actually all persons can be seen to be possessed, though most of them, neither sharp nor clear, are blurred copies of vital societal images. Possession is a difficult notion because Anglo-American culture wants to believe that someone, a person perhaps, is possessed, whereas here I am pushing towards the idea that a person is his possession - or collection of possessions - through and through, and nothing else.

My reorientation to human beings thus requires that they be seen as mediums of flesh caught up in acts perceived to be of ritual beings. The perceived person is like an envoy, from a ritual realm, using the only means at his disposal - a body, a voice, a dramaturgical talent, and so on - to open this realm, or even close it, to others. A person, I shall argue in later chapters, is there when you look at him because he is a fine actor of this societal notion "person", through whom nothing except what is shown can be seen, just because it is through the behavioural straws in his ritual wind that you come to see, with his help or despite his hindrance, the particular straw man that is his person. A person, therefore, is not a projection of some lantern-slide of self so much as his audience's projection, the other way round, into him, who dwells, in fact, anywhere but "within" his behavioural manifestations and whose only significant relationship to his body and his mind is that he, the possession, must always be a function of his dramaturgical ability in interaction, though this too in part will be a function of the precise form of his possession. I leap ahead of myself here, for these are some of my final conclusions.

The first section of this chapter enlarges on my analytic decision to regard conduct as subject to changes in fashion. It is the case, I shall propose, that proper conduct is fashionable conduct. But, since fashions conceal their "fashionableness" from their followers,

persons have difficulty in seeing that they sail before some other wind than that of their own autonomous will, however they may sail and wherever to. This idea that "good" behaviour (which will be conduct of acceptable ritual power) is fashionable conduct, dispels what Goffman has called "The Doctrine of Natural Expression" and acts as a wedge to open the theoretical door that is thrown wide in Part Three. (There, the fully interactive interaction is defined eventually as a maelstrom of interchangeable possessions, whose only law is its own revolution.)

However, before I move on to presence and then from presence to possession, I need to establish that conduct is not only fashionable but - because it must be form - is also always aesthetic. Geertz's (1975) analysis of Balinese social life is useful here, partly through Geertz's own revealed ethnocentricity. After showing how aesthetic Balinese life is not logically different to Anglo-American life, I then meet the objections of "authentic man" by arguing, with reference to Antonin Artaud's (1958) manifesto for theatrical cruelty (or truth to life), that a man who would tear his conduct off his body can only perform the conduct of a man doing just that. My argument here is a little like Berkeley's when he criticises John Locke's view that objects "cause" perceptions of themselves. Berkeley asked how it could be seen that what give rise to perceptions are objects if only the perceptions of the objects can be



seen, and he concluded that objects must be "constructions". (I go further in the case of people, and say that they construct themselves.) Recently Locke has been reinstated because his illogical epistemology honours everyday language practice, but in this thesis I am trying to dishonour language practices that would locate the "true" person in his innards (where, I say, he can never be seen to be except as an introjection from outer manifestations) for I feel that the inner view of man dishonours him, and so I enact my "ritual reasons" as described in Chapter I.

It emerges here that selves may be possessions of self by self, and possessions that are done well become interactionally "present", I now hypothesize, because he who would be "himself" is the conscious pilot of his vessel rather than a vessel trying to become conscious. Stages, I then note, are the places where dramatic enactments are clearest and where, for that reason, I suggest, conduct fashions may be explored, and in safety, moreover. So it is fitting to now enquire how actors, the practical scientists of conduct, go about their work. It would seem that they are neither purely technical nor purely expressive: between these two limits they obey rules for conduct whose full formulation would be impossibly cumbersome and whose partial formulation, if followed faithfully, would result in eccentric performance. Also, actors do the

best they can to keep "theatricality" out of their conduct, and theatricality is nothing other than old-fashioned acting. (That there are conduct fashions on the stage of course supports my view that everyday conduct is fashion-governed.)

Now, since the stage is the one place where the ritual code operates to the exclusion of everything else, it becomes hallowed - for being that place where specifically human and somehow valuable conduct is enacted. It is also a fact that while most people are oriented to dramatized ritual conduct, the profession of actor is still regarded as fairly lightweight. Putting these two facts together produces the conclusion that status life is not a true match of ritual life, and this is born out by the use of phrases like "you look the part" as compliments (it only helps to look the part). Goffman, I conclude, who sees ritualness as relatively fixed and as positively related to status, misses the important interactional variable of ritual power, which is a variable because not only is it altered by pollution conduct, as I showed in Chapter IV, but also is altered by fluctuations in dramatic competence. (So, though Goffman thinks that performers' secrets are "petty", I have arrived at an opposite opinion.)

Finally, I suggest that it is not enough to be fashionable if you want to be social. Some originality

of conduct is necessary and this necessarily brings on new fashions that may well first surface on stages. It is so because life that only replicates what has gone before, inventing nothing new, is not perceived as fully alive or human.

#### Conduct as Fashionable Conduct Modelled by Actors

I have described punks as young persons who adopt a fashion in music and clothes that, only appearing to emanate from a deeper profaning self, still gives them an inverted ritual power greater than the power they would have if they did not follow their fashion. I have also described how nurses systematically regulate their conduct in order to control the contaminations in whose midst they work, and how this must take the form of self-sacralization when the contaminants will not go away. In so doing, I have asked the reader who might grant that costume is always dictated by fashion (nurses' costume would be a very slow-moving fashion compared with the fast-moving punk fashion) and who would also grant that costume and interaction are inseparable, to see forms of conduct as being fashionable or unfashionable, which is to say, fashion-governed. It would follow that the rules of conduct, insofar as conduct should be fashionable conduct, operate only within their own sphere and cannot be related to anything but their own evolution, however zig-zag that might be and in whatever direction. (But I am not answering very important questions that are begged here, such as how

a fashion of conduct might be related to other human activity - if there is any such - or how changing events in the human universe might have effects on conduct fashions.)

I look at examples of conduct from this one angle and in this one light, preferring to paint a partial picture that makes sense than to botch an exhaustive portrait. I do this to see what this allows me to see, which otherwise would remain hidden. My procedure is not dissimilar, then, to that of someone testing a theory, the theory in this case being Goffman's ritual frame.

Where punks and nurses are obvious choices of fashion-controlled persons who actively exemplify the ritual code, actors are, as obviously, I feel, a good choice of persons who have a highly developed competence to appear like persons, because they can play many persons convincingly and are not confined to the playing of a single role like "punk" or "nurse". Thus, towards the end of the chapter I draw on the data source of complete tape transcripts of a three-week rehearsal period in a leading British provincial theatre<sup>1</sup> and in Part Three I repeatedly refer to observations of my own made during a nine-week period of intensive participant observation in a repertory company. In addition I constantly use the insights of stage performers

and their commentators to help propel my argument. Why I do this will emerge as the narrative proceeds, but one of the most important reasons for my singling out actors as persons of interest to anyone who would study interaction is that a great number of people spend great amounts of time watching them. Althiede & Snow (1979) quote the figure of six hours each day for the time each American TV is switched on and, seven years ago, Williams (1974a) quoted three hours per day for British TVs.

Williams (1974b) has this to say:

It seems probable that in societies like Britain and the United States more drama is watched in a week or weekend, by the majority of viewers, than would have been watched in a year or in some cases a lifetime in any previous historical period. It is not uncommon for the majority of viewers to see, regularly, as much as two or three hours of drama, of various kinds, every day. The implications of this have scarcely begun to be considered. It is clearly one of the unique characteristics of advanced industrial societies that drama as an experience is now an intrinsic part of everyday life, at a quantitative level which is so very much greater than any precedent as to seem a fundamental qualitative change. Whatever the social and cultural reasons may finally be, it is clear that watching dramatic simulation of a wide range of experiences is now an essential part of our modern cultural pattern.

Not only have dramatic enactments become a staple social diet of Anglo-Americans<sup>2</sup>, but understandings of social reality may be being subtly restated in a logic that borrows from (dramatic) entertainment formats, so that the infusion of dramatization into society is at two levels, the immediate one of visible presentations and the hidden one of issue-dramatization. Both Williams and Althiede & Snow advance this view that the criterion

for all TV representations of all human social realities is becoming entertainment. (Entertainment they both define as mundane behaviour with the mundanities removed and so structured as to encourage vicarious involvement.) Althiede & Snow, at some length and with convincing thoroughness, also argue that there has grown up a "media logic" that is now learnt from "entertainment-TV" and applied to all social phenomena (from sport to religion). Big institutions, say Althiede & Snow, are definitely beginning to shape their forms to fit this logic. I invoke these points here only to emphasise that people may be judging conduct by television's standards, and thus I think my choice of actors as persons worth studying by the observer of ritual conduct is justified, since these are the people who, for vast numbers of TV viewers, embody the forms of intelligible conduct, not only in their micro-behaviour but in their narratives. Actors, furthermore, suffer a process of natural selection. Only those recognised to be performing conduct as it "should" be performed can stay alive professionally; those who act badly - or too imaginatively for the average viewer - will not be seen. Televised actors, then, model the latest fashions of conduct which far less competently are variously adopted by their viewers, the whole symbiosis operating under a contrary rhetoric that persons are really, for example, the social flowerings of their chromosomes and genes.

So, if present-day conduct may be disposed to be

fashionable in its ritual forms and fashion is visible form, what of the forms? I now put forward the view that, since the logic of form for form's sake is aesthetic, conduct is considered good when it looks right, not if it is right by standards that are outside fashion. Thus, if conduct is fully aestheticized, it must be fashionable ritual. To explain this notion of aesthetic conduct more fully I examine the Balinese through Geertz's (1975) account of their social life, because perhaps more than any other society the Balinese "stand on ceremony". I come to the conclusion that the Balinese are their forms, as must be all other social persons, and that the aesthetic nature of conduct may be hidden from most understandings of conduct just because most conduct does work aesthetically.

### The Balinese<sup>3</sup>

Geertz (1975) characterises Balinese social life as one whose "obsessing ideal" is with conventions and proprieties that are exaggeratedly ceremonious conduct designed to prohibit spontaneity, emotionality, and individuality. Manners are a matter of "deep spiritual concern" and interaction is informed by a "playful theatricality" which is, however, grave in its performance. "Balinese social relations are at once a solemn game and studied drama." The formally ceremonial ritual life of the Balinese is as relaxed as civil life is formally ritualistic, and the two forms of conduct commingle: "Etiquette is a kind of dance, dance a kind of ritual,

and worship a form of etiquette." The courtesies of the Balinese, says Geertz, express sensibility rather than rectitude; people please one another "to please as beauty pleases, not as virtue pleases."

In this life of aesthetic conduct, the most intensely emphasised "affective regulator" is what the Balinese call "lek", a kind of stage fright. Lek is the worry that aesthetic illusions will collapse and that the part each person is playing will be suddenly exposed as a part being played by an entity who, having no part or form itself, will grotesquely mar the composition of Balinese society. Geertz also says that lek is the anxiety that the forms of conduct will no longer hold at bay those behaviours in which "the immediacy of the moment is felt with excruciating intensity," and, as if at the dictate of lek, social life in Bali is free of quarrels and open confrontations, and conflictual issues are blunted or dropped. Possibly this provides a reason why unaccomplished and frustrated tasks are abandoned, sometimes never to be resumed, and why the formal ritual that functions to summon down Balinese gods consists mostly in "getting ready and cleaning up". The Balinese, in all these ways, show one another - and this is Geertz's ethnocentric view - far too much respect. (It is interesting to compare the non-events of Balinese rituals to another "solemn game and studied drama", the English sport of cricket, which, in my view, quite appropriately has given its name to a moral code.)



All I want to suggest here is that Balinese conduct, as Geertz interprets it, has much more in common with Anglo-American conduct than at first appears to be the case. The Balinese are no different from other people, I am saying, in always trying to be for one another the best selves that they can be considered to be. It is just that their stalking ground, in proportion to its unusual freedom from direct threats to ideal impersonations, is as a whole vulnerable (and this is why *lek* is so pervasive). One false move in Bali and, for those witnessing it, the entire Balinese society is likely to disintegrate, leaving those Balinese people where people without society are always to be found, scrambling desperately to start a new one. But gaffes and embarrassing acts similarly anomize Anglo-American culture, because of the basic human predicament that, when persons are face-to-face, whatever they do must confirm, threaten, or create a form of conduct that fits into a moral ideology, even if what they do is nothing (an act which suggests an evaluation of social life and of other persons as valueless). Conduct, then, is inevitably aesthetically judged, even when it is considered ugly, and so far as it is effective in aesthetic terms it is seen as separate from and different in nature to some unseeable being who might be said to perform it, but whom, I argue, is not visible except through his performances.

But it could be objected here that aesthetic conduct in the Balinese style, with its attendant and constant

risk of rupture, does not allow of the easy innovation one associates with Anglo-American behaviour. To answer this it is only necessary to account for the "ease" of such innovations. Riezler (1943), in this connection, observes that friendship cannot be friendly without the constant exercise of tact, and he says that tact is the diligent indulgence one person gives to the nascent Meadian "me" of another's "I". No indulgence, no tact, and, therefore, no innovation. The mosaic of "mes" that form a society are preserved by tact so that their "Is" do not suffer shame, and in Bali, where the "me" predominates over the "I", tact seems to be built into the social system as a whole, whereas, in Anglo-American culture, tact is in part exercised at the discretion of individuals (so that it is possible to describe a person as tactless). Innovation, then, must rely on tactful forbearance, as well as on the willingness to risk being untactful, so that in the realm of aesthetic conduct the ritual self is as much in play as in more obvious fields of honour. This is the crucial point, that the growths of personality tact protects must be items of conduct, and just those items most ritually alive to persons. Societal tact in Bali (plus a seeming societal dislike of changing the prevailing fashion conduct) conceals its constant employment (tact, reflexively tactful, is not tactful if it can be seen for what it is) and thus it is that where the Balinese "really are" is in their non-abrasive social interlockings. Similarly, for Anglo-Americans, the parts of the self

that have most social life are just those that are most exposed to others. So the ritual self is as it were triangulated into a formal biographical definition from a host of small behaviours that can only be assessed by their comparison, in terms of form, with other behaviours, that is to say, aesthetically. In Part Three, I shall show that the most real person is he who has more concentrated and organized surfaces, not he who would disown his conduct as though, by doing so, he would release into the presence of other people a being who is essentially "him" and who, moreover, could somehow be seen by other people through some other medium than his appearance in gesture, expression, costume, words, and movement. Such "conduct-less" conduct might well be called de-aestheticized conduct, whose possibility I want now to explore. If it is impossible, then the necessity for conduct to be aesthetic conduct - fashionable ritual - is further established.

#### De-Aestheticized Conduct

In the theatre, the aspiration to rip conduct to shreds so as to release the person before he has a chance to play himself, has been best expressed by Antonin Artaud (1958) in The Theatre and Its Double, where he writes: "If there is still one hellish, truly accursed thing in our time it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signalling through the flames" (p 13). He compares his ideal theatre to a crisis like the plague: "It

invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts its energies; and we can see ... that from the human point of view, the action of theater, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world ..." (p 31). By definition, this kind of theatre must destroy whatever social institution could incubate it, but theatrical followers of the Theatre of Cruelty, which began with Artaud, have shrunk from Artaud's conclusion that theatre should be, as Derrida (1978) says: "Life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable" (p 234). Derrida describes Artaud's stalking ground thus:

A closed space, that is to say a space produced from within itself and no longer organized from the vantage of an other absent site, an illocality, an alibi or invisible utopia. The end of representation, but also invisible representation; the end of interpretation but also an original interpretation that no master-speech, no project of mastery will have permeated and levelled in advance. A visible representation certainly, directed against the speech which eludes sight ... but whose visibility does not consist of a spectacle mounted by the discourse of a master. Representation, then, as the autorepresentation of pure visibility and even pure sensibility.

This pursuit of the nascent is also carried on by Derrida in his writing, except that unlike Artuad he does not have a vision of what his words would look like if they overcame their verbality. However, once such a project is undertaken, forms of conduct cease to be anything but successive betrayals of what is dumbly implied to be their actual life, and the result in language can be,

as Jameson (1972) observes of Derrida, a "philosophic language that feels its way gropingly along the walls of its own conceptual prison, describing it from the inside as though it were only one of the possible worlds of which the others are nonetheless inconceivable" (p 186). But Artaud and Derrida who would strip conduct of itself must forever fail at the instant of revelation, when what would be revealed reveals only that it was already revealed, and both Artaud and Derrida, to a marked degree, are in the predicament of Hamlet, as Rosenberg (1970) states it: "Hamlet is obsessed by the sense of being an actor, that is to say, of falsifying himself through what he does and says. His self-consciousness exceeds his role and blocks his performance of it." But where Hamlet searches for a better performance of a richer aprt, Artaud would attack the part itself, only, of course, in my view, to find himself playing the part of a man attacking himself. In his fury to murder his falsifying outer selves, I feel, Artaud fails to give expression to Artaud; he becomes instead a particularly understandable human passion, which victimizes him. Raging against what to him was aesthetic conduct of an insipid and mediocre kind, nonetheless, in his writings, Artaud conducted himself with admirable aesthetic verve, and there, rather than in the mental asylum of Rodez where he was confined for much of the latter part of his life, did he, I feel, release his realest self.

So conduct can only be sloughed off by conduct, and a person has to suffer his characterization by others out of the behaviours he, like Artaud, might want to fling in their horrified faces. But, if he is not like Artaud, how is he to take his place as an acceptable member of society? Actors, here, I think, can show how "acting" is made to disappear from view and how conduct can be passed off as inevitably expressive. I now discuss how I think actors bring this about, and finally I come to the idea of presence.

### Life in Everyday Life

An actor, while being someone he is not, can perform so well that his audience will forget he is an actor and engross themselves in the part he plays. I argue in this thesis that persons who would look most like persons in interaction similarly act, and that the kind of part played is of less relevance to its being taken seriously than the competence in playing it. It is of course evident in contemporary Anglo-American culture that persons are asked to only play one part, their own. (Perhaps a societal reason for this is to prevent confusion, just as a reason for styles of conduct being uniformized into fashions may be to decrease ambiguities.) Persons, then, possess themselves with recognizable social identities, though most of them are taught to regard their own and others' identities as modelled after inner propensities.

The possession of self by self is very well described by George Eliot (1957) in Middlemarch:

Every nerve and muscle in Rosamond was adjusted to the consciousness that she was being looked at. She was by nature an actress of parts that entered into her physique; she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own.

This is a little like the admired social faculty for self-possession. A contention that I shall later amplify will be that highly self-possessed individuals, like Rosamond in the above quotation, are seen to be that because of their particularized definition, which gives them more ritual power than less self-possessed persons. Most actors, and many other people besides, call this quality of particularized self-possession "presence", which I think is the equivalent of ritual power, lending a high interactional status to he or she who has it, regardless of all other statuses. (Chaikin (1972) says that actors have presence where ordinary persons do not because they are especially sensitive to their immediate situations.)

Possession of this sort seems to be what the actors I studied were striving to engineer for themselves on stage. It is often as if actors want to be taken over by their parts and yet remain fully alert. Playing the part is then rather like manoeuvring a strange being from the inside. (Taking over a part, on the other hand, by imagining oneself to be the part and then trying to change, from inside out, does not seem to work so well.)

This is the moment, I think, to be more specific about actors and their techniques. Drawing from my own participant observations and from the transcripts I mentioned, it is possible for me to tentatively develop some data-based generalizations.

Actors seem to operate between pure technicality and mindless emotionality according to rules they hesitate to put into words. It is as though verbal reification of techniques is seen as containing the possibility of ossifying performances that will go out of date. Furthermore, the fact that in the theatre certain stage conduct is criticized for being "theatrical" suggests that professional stage acting is fashion-governed.

Certainly actors are reluctant to become conscious of how they act, and John Gielgud (Funke & Booth, 1961) is typical in defining the process not only as "secret" but also as one that would not work for the actor whom it preoccupied. The fear seems to be of getting caught in verbalizations (of artistic techniques) that would be bound thereafter to crank out the same kind of performance in every play, always stuck in an old fashion of acting. Thus the theatre director of the transcripts would object to theatrical or "bogus" acting, contrasting this to acting that was "truthful" and "absolutely right and natural," and there are no signs that the actors did not know exactly what theatrical meant. But there are actors who rely on or think that they rely on



technique alone. Helen Hayes (Funke & Booth, 1961) describes these as "mechanical marvels", implying that, unless the marvellous eclipses the mechanical, audiences will not be tricked into seeing a "real" stage character. In other words, technique and technique alone is a hard route; some guidance from unformulated understandings is more likely to take the actor to the audience as a person. (And in the same way that the technical body can obstruct the body of a real person, so words too can be a barrier to their meaning. The director of the transcripts is always against this verbalising of lines; high praise from him for an actor whose speech is effective would be "every word was a thought" and "you were really thinking every word.")

It seems probable, from what the microanalysts, on the behavioural side, have discovered and from what textualists, on the verbal side, have found in words alone, that any rote technique for speech making would be impossibly cumbersome to articulate. An actor, then, needs to keep his very complex and far-reaching understandings of his acting methods subverbal so as not to come under the biasing influence just a few of these would exert if they were preferred to a verbal level. Notably, the director of the transcripts, as well as the director of the company I researched, refrain from telling actors in detail how to make moves and intonations: overall "blocking" parameters are laid down within which it seems to be the actor's responsibility to find the "right" move

or tone or expression. (When, however, an actor does not fulfil this responsibility, he calls down on himself - in the transcripts - this comment: "You make me feel like a puppeteer this morning, which is not what I see my function as being really.")

But human meaning is not only lost by mechanical enactments; it also departs when high emotion is represented in a one-to-one match, so to speak. The director says: "Bits which work least well are roar and rant, sound and fury, because then it is just meaningless and any direction in a sense disappears," and, "if you blow your rag, then actually we don't have anywhere to go." So the reverse of over-technicality is not right either. Removal of the control of the character removes the character too; something needs to be left to be shown to be gripped by emotion, or the emotion, gripping nothing, is nobody's and therefore dramatically meaningless.

Thus, from two directions, what a person might be on stage is hinted at here. He is not a machine and he is not undisciplined expression. Between these two extremes he steers himself by reference to rules he dare not formulate for fear of always thereafter being no more than the repetitious product of these formulations, an old-fashioned theatrical. The same, I suggest, may be true for persons in everyday life, simply because they must recognise life-like conduct on stage in the

same way that they recognise it off stage. Persons, then, control themselves the better to be themselves and try not to think too much about their doing so or about how they do it lest they seize up like a motorist who cannot see the road he is driving because he will not take his eyes out of the engine. But that there is an engine which has to be driven on a road is the point.

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Williams (1974a) says:

The drama of any period, including our own, is an intricate set of practices of which some are incorporated - the known rhythms and movements of a residual but still active system - and some are exploratory - the difficult rhythms and movements of an emergent representation, rearrangement, new identification.

So the stalking ground of a theatrical stage is one place where, perhaps more than anywhere else, new fashions of conduct, if enacted through new fashions of its staging, can emerge in legible form. Stages and not everyday situations are reserved for conduct that is understood to be more selfconscious than usual, and they are where experiments are performed with the ritual code, which there operates to the exclusion of almost everything else. Possibly this accounts for the hallowed nature stages are attributed in the literature of the theatre. Funke & Booth (1961) talk, for example, of "temples", while Segal (1978) says a stage is a "consecrated place", and

refers to the playing out of a drama in front of an audience as a "communion". There seems to be no escaping the fact that just where ritual conduct is fashionable it is an aesthetic performance or, as I shall show in Part Three, a controlled possession.

### Conclusion

That people do go to theatres or watch drama on television and will accord respect to performers along a scale of lifelikeness, does suggest that, in Anglo-American culture, lifelike conduct in its most pure and heightened forms is dramatized conduct, that is, the ritually live conduct of knowing possession. However, the actor cannot be the ideal type of a person simply because, although more than any other person he is able to be effectively possessed, he has no societal role but that of "actor" by which to be possessed off-stage. Off-stage, his trained talent is of little benefit to him just because it is known to be trained in a culture which wants to believe that natural possession is a form of expressed innerness and that ritual power can be any person's if he is given a high enough status. Later I shall expand on this theme but for now I would point out that it can be said of a high status person, "He looks the part", and, that it is not said too often of these persons, argues that the particular kind of ritual power I am busy defining here is not obviously connected to societal position.

Goffman has frequently said that what is essentially human is the competence persons have to look human in approved fashion, but he has never gone on to consider competence as a variable capacity or to consider what this implies for interactions. (His work on "faulty persons" (Goffman, 1953) and on stigmatized persons (Goffman, 1968) does not touch on the issue of competence in this sense, for these persons, because of a fault or a stigma, are placed in a position of being deemed incompetent, even though they may have no less competence than normals.) My suggestion in this chapter is that power of a ritual kind accrues to competence in interaction, and, conversely, that incompetence decreases worth, and my criticism of Goffman is that, by sometimes not incorporating his ritual in his dramaturgical frame, he has unfortunately diminished the role of awe in interactions. And when he says, "The audience sense secret mysteries and powers behind the performance, and the performer senses that his chief secrets are petty ones" (Goffman, 1971, p 76), he surely slights the degree of transportation a person can feel in the presence of good acting or even in the presence of those persons who are described as "larger than life." Goffman's reduction of the theatre to a trick played by "mechanical marvels" directed by puppeteers, and his consequent draining from the dramaturgical frame of as-yet ill-defined sociological notions like "being moved" or "purged", though it frees his readers from the doctrine of natural expression, still discounts the everyday

knowledge that some people and not others can "get through" to other people. (This was an inevitable result of a necessary analytic division of dramaturgical from ritual frame, and the fact that some elements of interaction were lost thereby is, of course, as nothing to the gains made by Goffman's sociology, but what was lost is enough, I feel, to make it worth my while trying to effect some recoveries.)

Cless (1979) quotes Herbert Blau as saying that the supreme ability of an actor is "to bring out of nowhere an action that is incredibly strange and perfectly right, so that one feels, after it is performed, that he has witnessed an enchantment, and can only ask in admiration, 'Where did that come from, it was so true?'" This is the recognition that if a person is to invest himself with ritual power he must behave in an original way that connects appearance to meaning so that there could be no other appearance for no other meaning. And, if it were not possible for persons to endlessly create new forms of conduct, social life would quickly assume a stilted, mechanical aspect in which it would become hard to imagine that persons are really alive. The living dead, of course, are everywhere, but most people do not feel they could be befriended. Spontaneity, originality, alertness to the situation, the ability to unambiguously enact apposite meaning, these are the marks of life, and it is impossible to imagine any interaction that lacked at least a modicum of such life being properly

termed a human interaction. Goffman, I feel - fortunately for me else I would not know what to write about - has never turned into this side road, the role of life in everyday life. In Part Three, I clarify and sort out the ideas from this chapter relating to that theme. In the "Summary and Conclusions" I finally get to the point of suggesting that the side road is a freeway.

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## Notes

- 1 These transcripts were very kindly made available to me by Professor Iain Mangham.
- 2 I repeatedly use the category "Anglo-American", and always do so only negatively to indicate in the loosest possible way the group within which I should be considered to be ethnocentric. It is not a term I like using but all the possible alternatives seem even worse.
- 3 It does not actually influence my argument either way if Geertz's Balinese are merely his projections of them (and I do not think they are that). The Balinese here serve as "ideal types" and have equal relevance to my argument whether they are as Geertz describes them or whether they are purely the construct of a respected anthropologist.



### Part Three: Possession and Rapture

## CHAPTER VI

### POSSESSION

This chapter provides a more solid foundation for the idea of possession than the few remarks on the subject in the previous chapter, and so the reader may feel he is marking time, and, indeed, until Chapter IX, there will be no significant theoretical expansion on any of the points so far raised, though all these will be dealt with at greater length. Possession, I have said, is not possession unless it is controlled. However, I defer any discussion of the control of possession until the next chapter, so as not to complicate the simple assertion I put forward here, that the idea of possession in interaction is a ritual idea following naturally upon Goffman's appreciation of persons as ritual beings. Some of the consequences of this view are examined now, and others later on.

To begin with, I adapt David Cole's (1975) thoughts about the "illud tempus" to show that his is a useful rhetoric for actors in particular and persons in general, and then I go on to note how some theatrical gurus already behave as though there is no doubt for them that there is an illud tempus.

This leads me to suggest that the life which the "theatre of

possession" wishes to impart to audiences is the life of interaction when interaction becomes fully interactive, and I reflect that this life is infused as if from an illud tempus, or ritual realm, by cues that imply the realm as a more probable origin of the person than any other. (It goes without saying that the ritual realm is only "there" in as much as it is effectively evoked by conduct.) So what I am proposing is a sort of dominant "frame" for interactions, outside which, I contend, they scarcely merit being termed interaction. "Camp", as I interpret this, vouches for my ritual ideas, for I see camp conduct to be the response of actors to their predicament, as ritual specialists, of not being able to stop becoming over-charged with meaning: actors burlesque the human to "earth" their ritual power. A new concept, "narratibility", emerges now. Persons must have narratibility or feel worthless. This is because life is essentially ritual life that, in its turn, is effective dramatic life which - when its episodes are strung together into a biography - is not dramatic unless it is in its overall pattern intelligible or, as I have called it, "narratible", and narratible, moreover, as the person's life and not the life of some other person or ritual force that was more important to him than himself, whoever he was in that case. So people often try to make sense for themselves (in Chapter IX I show how they make ritual sense for others too) by pulling out of the thickly woven material of their lives long strands of narrative they claim as being their lives entire, and, I conclude, they do this because they are ritual beings who, to be those, need to be possessed

by themselves. Finally, I introduce Chapter VII, by letting into my discussion the deferred idea that possession must be controlled. I give the example of tact as the control exerted by a better self (who protects others) to be a better self (who does not untactfully show himself as that), and also the example of the psychopath to convince the reader that, if a person will not control himself at all, nonetheless society will see his uncontrol as a species of conduct highly controlled by a pathological condition. So, having shown that "possession", as I receive it, is a viable concept and that it admirably suits a ritual theory of persons, I arrive at a position from which I can explore, in the next chapter, some of the ways possession is controlled so as to be itself.

In some cultures the "shaman" has inspired awe by journeying on behalf of his audience to a realm David Cole (1975) calls the "illud tempus", and the "hungan" in some Haitian cultures returns from that realm as one of its personages for an audience. The illud tempus is a spirits' stalking ground where the dead, too, commingle, and it is more powerful by far

than quotidian reality. (Freud called it the unconscious.) Not anybody might visit it and those who do are endowed with a special status, neither wholly symbolic nor wholly political but always imbued with magical power. In Anglo-American culture, says Cole, it is the actor who more than anyone else combines the roles of shaman and hungan. If he performs well on stage he is "seized by the revelation of fate" (Frobenius) just like a "primitive ritualist" from the remote past of the human race. Frobenius (quoted in Huizinga, 1976) adds:

The reality of the natural rhythm of genesis and extinction has seized hold of his consciousness, and this, inevitably and by reflex action, leads him to represent his emotion in an act.

In cultures of excessive liminality (Victor Turner's word for social forms that are ambiguous, dissolving, and nascent), a true actor, who would travel to and from the illud tempus, might find himself, in the absence of either appropriate institutions or adequate conduct fashions, enacting the seizures of an epileptic, as did Dostoyevsky, suggests Shusterman (quoted in Turner, 1975) so as to perform a true act in a social life he did not believe in.

In Anglo-American culture, the temper tantrum might be an equivalent demonstration by a person that he is other than the self that had a temper to lose, having become the temper, someone seized, who, unlike those who cannot lose their tempers, can be seized from beyond himself by forces that use him to loudhail and semaphore to the world that they wish to

enter their audience. Here Sartre (1963) gives a reason for the conduct of anger - and one that I think implies an understanding, like mine, that social life is constantly in need of dramatic simplifications that will reinvest it with ritual - when he says: "Anger is merely a blind and magical attempt to simplify situations that are too complex." And in Anglo-American cultures, as in the primitive cultures Coles alludes to, the idea that an excellent performance, not just on stage but also in music and literature, has been "inspired" needs no explanation, and inspired performances are recognised as far more valuable than those that are uninspired, so much so that the word uninspired is used of performances barely registering as performances.

My purpose here is neither to establish the possibility of an *illud tempus* nor to analyse it, but to indicate that persons do behave as if it is there. We do not need to believe that an excellent performance is a kind of seizure by persons or forces unknown, merely to note that that is how one is often viewed, being evaluated along a scale that runs from non-seizure to total possession, at whose limit epileptic performances, for instance, can be frightening to the degree that possession seems total, when the convulsing person seems to have gone away completely and to have been replaced by bizarre conduct whose gestures cannot be interpreted. Thus Otto (1965) obviously feels confident that he will be understood when he says that madness touches he who wears the mask of Dionysus:

The whole splendour of that which has been submerged draws imperatively near at the same time that it is lost in eternity. The wearer of the mask is seized by the sublimity and dignity of those who are no more. He is himself and yet someone else.

So the idea that persons are possessed by their everyday roles might be closer to everyday understanding than that, for example, persons take roles (Turner, 1962) that leave their players essentially unchanged.

Now Artaud did not doubt that the lifeless decadence of the theatre of his day came of its breaking away from "gravity, from effects that are immediate and painful - in a word, from danger," and he associated this lack of raw experience in the theatre with the alienation of populations in general. He thought that theatre would never again become "a means of true illusion" until it offered audiences "the truthful precipitates of dreams." The appeal would be to the public's taste for crime, eroticism, and savagery (this taste, of course, is met now by the gutter press and by television, with its concentration on violent action even in news reportage). Very recently Cless (1979) reports alienation of the type Artaud reacted against as still being normal in contemporary American theatre:

While the rehearsal and development of the play should be a thorough meeting of the actor as a person with his character and the script to enable rich full communication of the play with other actors and the audience, rehearsal is most often either the technical labor of assembling the parts of the play through mesmerization and stylization, or at an even more estranged, but deceptively subjective level, the effacement and denial of person through character presentation (i.e. a way of hiding from the audience is to fake subjectivity).

Cless goes on to accuse theatre in America of reifying experience, prohibiting occasions of transcendence and "spiritual communion". Whether or not this is universally the case and whether or not a wholly alienated actor nevertheless could fully "move" an audience, Cless is still an example of someone like Artaud who believes in a kind of possession that is truer to life than merely technical enactment. Indeed, possessed by this idea, the theatrical guru, Lee Strasberg, influenced a generation of leading American actors, notably Brando and Dean. Possession, then, makes sense to a number of people whose vocation is to make characters palpably sensible to audiences, and it seems that theatrical experts in social life know very well that enactments can reach a much more humanly involving level than the cognitive. These enactments "come to life" on stage when the human part of human beings somehow intensifies itself, as it was the purpose to so intensify it, to the point of its destruction, of Antonin Artaud and the regret that this is not done of Downing Cless.

In everyday life, it must be allowed, persons are said to become "enthusiastic" or to get "carried away" or to "fly into a temper" or to be "inspired". So it is that, even informally and without the framing protection of staging devices, persons are seen to bring into their interactions energies that in some degree take them over, and, when "infectiously", others too. Moreover, the person consistently failing to be taken over, to be seized, to be



possessed, is dismissed as "unprepossessing", someone rather less than a full human being. There does exist, then, a way of discussing persons in interaction that uses terms from theatrical experience which have less reference to role playing (and to performing in the sense of making the moves of a formal game) than to possession by spirits and to performing in the sense of being an intermediary in an essentially supernatural ritual. (And it is precisely the failure of populations to accept this in practical terms that fires Artaud and more recently both the Pole Grotowski and the English director Peter Brook with the missionary zeal to create theatrical events that would make participants into genuine communicants.) An article of experientially-grounded faith for these missionaries is that persons are larger, stronger, more mysterious, and less controllable than they might feel they are if they do not get the chance to witness actors living intensely in a dramatic realm, where the possibility to be good and the possibility to be evil coexist in close proximity to the consequences of choosing to be either. This realm is understood to be a true stalking ground of the soul. So Cole's illud tempus is the place where people, in disengaging from temporal roles, experience with unusual concentration what it is to be a person. And wherever people are, in whatever interaction, they must, however incompetently and unwittingly, come in and out of the illud tempus as they conduct themselves, or else seem to be

possessed by nothing more transcendent than the idea that social life is a series of quick calculations unproblematically acted upon with no emotional sense of being alive in the present.

Thus, when a woman wears diamonds round her neck, in her ears, and as a tiara on her head, she tries for a resplendence that must seem to come from some other place than the jewel box on her dressing-room table and, before that, from the shop window in the high street, and this other place is a ritual realm such as might take away the breath of one so socially accomplished as George Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth: "It was a new kind of stage-experience to her to be close to genuine grand ladies with genuine brilliants and complexions, and they impressed her vaguely as coming out of some unknown drama, in which their parts perhaps got more tragic as they went on" (Eliot, 1957, p421). This same "unknown drama" or ritual realm is perceived by the narrator of Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu when, nearing death, he attends a society gathering where there are women he had once admired: "There was no limit to their efforts to fight against age; they held the mirror of their faces towards beauty, vanishing like a setting sun whose last rays they passionately long to return." Here the narrator evokes a neo-platonic stalking ground in which the capture of and possession by the ideal form of beauty itself is the serious sociable game that is nearly over for the players. But the punk girl with a dog-collar

round her neck, as much as the bejewelled society belle or the nurse with her white paper hat, seeks, too, to bring into her interactions ritual power from realms that only exist because she originates them through appearances. By the same argument, every person in his or her every interaction to some degree brings himself or herself from a world he or she creates, from which he or she is the only envoy, appearing to be that, I am saying, by being possessed. Two illustrations (from the repertory company) of the ease with which realms can be created follow here. In the first instance, a perfectly English actress creates the "wild west" by her posture and costume combined, and, in the second, the realm of Waiting for Godot is brought effortlessly into an office by the "acting" of just one line:

Candy Starr has put on her hooker's gear for the first time. She comes out of the ladies' dressing room and stands in the kitchen doorway with one hand on her hip. Immediately the men in the kitchen see her, they start cheering and whistling. "Now, now, boys, one at a time," she drawls, smiling and making as if to chew gum.

Pozzo has shaved his head, since the stage directions require him to be bald. The administrator looks up from his desk and is visibly taken aback by Pozzo minus his thick brown hair. Pozzo draws himself up and puffs out his chest and places an imaginary monocle in his eye. "This office is a tip," he says, in his Pozzo voice. "Well sir, it's not me but the other fellow who's left it in this terrible state," says the administrator in an Irish accent.

Now sociability seen in this rhetoric must be a special problem for professional actors who know only too well one another's unknown realms and who, moreover, are blessed with rare vocational capacities to detect dramaturgical insincerity.

What do they do when they get together for socialibility?

I used to accompany the actors I was researching to the club where they met after giving their evening performances, so I was able to see at close range the practice of "camp". Camp behaviour is a self-mocking burlesque of the professional theatrical manner. An actor being camp presents a grotesque of the worst possible professional self that could be attributed to him by those who are watching. Thus, by "camping it up" actors can vie with one another to be ridiculous beings, there for amusement only. Interaction, then, is made unserious by persons making themselves unserious; what could have been a deadly stalking ground becomes a coconut-shy with each thrower of a ball taking his turn as a coconut. Camp is also, interestingly, a common interactional style among overt homosexuals (Newton, 1979, provides a very detailed ethnography of this) who like actors are very familiar with one another's secret selves, yet prefer to enjoy sociability than turn it into a continuous encounter group. So camp is a broad protective parody of the self, deliberately contrived to seem to be coming from the vanity and technical virtuosity of its performer rather than from any type of illud tempus. The fact that camp is quite demanding of its performers of course further argues the omni-presence of an illud tempus; it requires much effort and skill to evoke laughter by the camp conduct that works inasmuch as it turns the person before one's very eyes into merely that being who is before one's very eyes. And that

camp is a behavioural lingua franca of theatrical people can only, therefore, bespeak their deep sense that persons are sacred. The following fieldwork note of an episode shows how "B", the director and lead player of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, keeps out of a difficult ritual realm by a timely resort to camp - when he heads off Martini's request to look at interpretation - and then how camp can restore good humour by earthing an interactional "atmosphere" before it can build up too much charge. (In this and other fieldwork illustrations I refer to actors by the names of the characters they play.)

They now do the scene in which Bromden has to deliver his "That ain't McMurphy" speech. B, at the end, asks, "OK, OK, do you want to run this scene?" Martini says, "I don't like this." B ripostes in an affected voice, "Don't you like it darling?" and so avoids finding out what is making Martini unhappy. They start again. Big Nurse has a very powerful line early on. She has to say to McMurphy, "Isn't it past your bedtime?" This line, given disingenuously calm elocution, can be a sarcastic taunt that reminds McMurphy of Big Nurse's institutional power. For some reason Big Nurse cannot get the line right. She keeps saying, "Isn't it time..." She tries it and fluffs it three times. B grits his teeth and says in an undertone, "Record's stuck." Eventually they take a break and, on their way out to the kitchen, Cheswick and Martini dance across the set together. B catches sight of this and calls out, "You two - it'll end in tears." Laughter all round.

Theatre will decline, says Artaud, when it presumes that conduct can be fully accounted in other than ritual terms:

Psychology, which works relentlessly to reduce the unknown to the known, to the quotidian and the ordinary, is the cause of the theater's abasement and its fearful loss of energy.

I myself think that psychologizing is not the enemy of ritual life so much as is the assumption that what is known exceeds the unknown, an assumption not held in the social sciences when these were the product of a materialist-positivist drive that expressed a sense of enormous ritual confidence that the known should imperialise the unknown, now alas tending to divide and subdivide into a proliferation of internecine texts that, for fear of committing inadvertent heresies, dare not turn their backs on the literature to face the phenomena at the frontiers. Whether or not there is more to social life than is thought to be known about it is, however, not at issue here, since the point I make is that this can be thought and is definitely thought in the theatre world, where the language of appreciation - "being moved" and so on - suggests a widespread acceptance that a great performance is virtually quite beyond, say, the conduct of a subject watched by a psychologist in a laboratory. In this text I only say that this is a thinkable position, though, as I explained in Chapter I, that I say it involves my saying it ought to be thought (but not saying it could say that it ought not to be thought, which I regard as a less scientific stance). The belief that there are supernatural possibilities in human interaction (which may be attenuated to the belief that there might be many as-yet unknown factors in play therein) entails another, that a person's life should make sense as a drama or a narrative history does (which may be attenuated to a

formulation like "be satisfactorily analysed"). When this second belief is shaken, a person is as disoriented as when he is desacralized. Thus, Joan Didion (1979):

It was a time of my life when I was frequently "named". I was named godmother to children. I was named lecturer and panelist, colloquist and conferee. I was even named, in 1968, a Los Angeles Times "Woman of the Year" along with Mrs Ronald Reagan, the Olympic swimmer Debbie Meyer, and ten other Californian women who seemed to keep in touch and do good work. I did no good works but I tried to keep in touch. I was responsible. I recognised my name when I saw it....This was an adequate enough performance as improvisations go. The only problem was that my entire education, everything I had ever been told, or had told myself, insisted that the production was never meant to be improvised. I was supposed to have a script, and had mislaid it. I was supposed to hear cues, and no longer did. I was meant to know the plot, but all I knew was what I saw: flash pictures in variable sequence, images with no "meaning" beyond their temporary arrangement, not a movie but a cutting-room experience. In what could possibly be the middle of my life I wanted still to believe in the narrative and the narrative's intelligibility.

What has happened here is that narratibility has vanished and with it the sense of intelligibility without which dramatic enactments are seen to lose their ritual power. Having lost ritual power, Joan Didion feels "absurd". Yet this "cutting-room experience" of life is the professional fate of an actor whose "working" reality must always be radically shifting as he goes from drama to drama. Particularly striking, to their observer, is how actors make use of their current dramatic worlds during their everyday conduct, which they will richly season with borrowed lines, adopted accents, remembered gestures, as though relishing the fact of living in discontinuous realities. At first

this might seem puzzling, but it is explained, I think, in terms of the actor's self as an actor. The more he is a performer, of whatever bits and pieces, the more he is an actor. So his discontinuities actually affirm his career continuity. Similarly, though she does not say it, Joan Didion's career continuity of professional writer is affirmed by her conduct of writing about her sense of personal discontinuity. She invents a narrative to her life by narrating the lack of one and so testifies to the social compulsion to make sense in those terms.

Narratibility of self creates for a person a sense that he and not some other agent is the hero of his life. Whatever this "hero" is, he it is, of all a person's selves, who, in possessing the person, most personifies him, and for whom the person feels a very deep affinity that in unalienated periods can approach complete identification. However, inability to narrate self, for example, by being at the mercy of unpredictable and powerful persons, who are able to command any performance they like, can make a person feel that he is the satellite of an agent more important to him in the end than he is. The hero stops being oneself and becomes someone else in the face of unnarratibility. For children this someone else is the parent; for a soldier, the general; for a madman, perhaps the psychiatrist; and for Freud, the unconscious. The narratives these people would tell would only be their own incidentally, and their ritual worth would only be a function of their hero's, and



so one strategy for restoring or increasing ritual worth might be the self-construction of an autonomous narrative, as Charles Dickens realised at the beginning of his autobiographical novel David Copperfield when he wrote: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." Paradoxically, then, disorientation and confusion and loss of ritual self (the varieties of "rapture" that I analyse in Chapter IX) can be the prelude to new performances or possessions that are richer than the old, and this is what I shall argue at length in Chapter IX.

So far I have spoken of possession quite loosely, in order to introduce the concept in general terms before going on to refine it, and I have not paused to consider how a person might control his possession or how possession might be seen to be what it is, but it is the case that possession must always be controlled, for, even in the extreme instance of epileptic seizure, the convulsions are shaped by the contingent facts of human physiology.

The exercise of tact is an example of an ever present control of possession in interactions. Tactful persons, when they save faces that are in danger of being lost, must become possessed by their "better selves" at the same time as they control this possession in order not to untactfully show their tact. In some social situations, moreover, not only is the better self required to control its possession (by possessing its control of tact) but the whole self might need to be in such a relation to control. Thus Genet (1967)

observes that "in prison you cannot afford to be casual," and Allerton (Allerton and Parker, 1964) relates that a prisoner's first appearance on his wing in the period called Free Association is known as "going on stage". Genet and Allerton are writing of prison life where convicts are the only resources for the ritual survival of one another, and obviously in these conditions it will be necessary to always be so socially legible that neither threats nor promises are offered unless they are to be "honoured". But prison life is perhaps only an intensification of everyday life, in which, if a person should do something his others regard as uncharacteristic or unusual, he is likely to be faced with some such question as: "Whatever possessed you?"

To conclude, the case of the psychopath might be cited to show how the control of possession is not only an inevitable condition of possession but is also positively demanded by society which, not given it, casuistically confers it. Thus, when a person's control of possession is persistently weak and seen to be so, he is said to be a "moral imbecile" or a "psychopath" (Eysenck, 1971, p54). In this extreme example of a person who, as it is said, (regardless of the damage this causes himself as well as others) finds it impossible to substitute deferred for immediate satisfactions the clinical psychologist such as Eysenck encounters the phenomenon of uncontrolled conduct in its rawest state. Accordingly, the psychopath is

clinically defined as one who has "emotional poverty", who is "undependable" and "irresponsible", who, unable to plan ahead, yet "over-reacts" to stimuli, and who, furthermore, is not perturbed in the least by his "social maladjustment". This person, the psychopath, because he cannot be proven to be brain-diseased or neurotic or psychotic or defective in intelligence, and, despite that he can "verbalise all the social and moral rules", while not being able to "obey them in the way that others do" is nonetheless very definitely not deemed a case of uncontrolled possession. He is, by nominalist magic, for Eysenck and his colleagues at any rate, ipso facto a psychopath, which word explains everything: the less control he has the more will he be this clinically-defined possession, "psychopath". Thus, a person approaching the societal limit of uncontrolled conduct can be seen as an example of a very precise type who the more confirms himself as that the more he is in reality no type whatsoever. In Anglo-American society, therefore, even completely uncontrolled possession, by being regarded as "psychopathic" can be and is recovered to the rubric of "control", and this fact must argue a general reluctance to see conduct as dispossessed by virtue of being uncontrolled. The message is: you will be a person, even if we have to write textbooks demonstrating the internal coherence of miscellany.

Now that I have established possession and its control as terms in my discourse, I can move on, in the next chapter, to tighter, more controlled definition of possession, precisely by explaining some of the means by which it is controlled.

It should be remembered that I am using the concept of possession not only because it is current in everyday language and in the theatre but also because it offers the analyst of interaction a series of "ritual" connotations (around persons' performances in everyday life) that formulae such as "role-playing" singularly lack. However, I am not defining possession in so many words because I think that would prematurely pre-empt any explorations of its possible uses. Here I take as my counsellor Lev Vygotsky (1962): "The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diversified realisation in speech." And Popper (1973) too would endorse my procedure: "The precision of a language depends. . . upon the fact that it takes care not to burden its terms with the task of being precise."

## CHAPTER VII

### CONTROLLED POSSESSION

In this chapter I show how possession becomes itself through some of the varieties of its control. I begin by restating the case that all conduct is performance, then I consider natural conduct as being the performance "that dare not speak its name." This leads me to briefly note that the morality of performance resides less in the "contents" of a performance than in its competence, natural conduct being conduct that must not betray its competent performance. (The contents of performance, I speculate, may be nothing other than workings-out of competence problems.) Two forms of control have now been discussed, the control of having to look as though control is not required and the control brought to bear by a moral demand that in performance control be as much as a person can exercise. Now I look at how performances are controlled from outside by different sorts of framing devices, and then the temporal frame of "rehearsal" is considered on its own. From here it is an obvious step to the subject of professional actors and how they actually work. I conclude that actors are societally controlled because their possessions are too good. After this, I look at David Cole's concept of "rounding", applying it to those possessions whose control is greatest.

I finish the chapter by arguing that live control - literally "live" in the entertainment world and figuratively "original" in everyday life - is a sign that possession is being actively controlled and therefore is a live possession and as such truly human.

### Conduct as Performance

Although I have established that conduct may be readily viewed as possession, I have yet to fully substantiate my claim that all behaviour is performance, not only from the point of view of a person's audience but also from his point of view, when, I shall suggest, he unknowingly or, in some cases, very knowingly is a person for other people. It is worth labouring this point, because, once it is granted, it is that much harder to view persons as being somehow behind and somehow bigger and stronger than their appearances. Such a view is part of the Anglo-American

heritage and thus not easy to forget, but it can easily distract the reader from the image of a person that I am promulgating, as being a possession, not to be understood as having been "caused" from within, or even by an interaction between outside and inside. The possession as it goes along creates itself anew, drawing into itself its own consciousness that is not borrowed from an already existing consciousness but is created by itself over against the physiology it possesses. This is the meaning of possession, conjured out of conduct in every kind of interaction, even, as I shall show, with itself (Chapter IX). So such a being is much more than a congeries of Goffman's "dramatic effects" (his definition of selves in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life) for Goffman's being creates no ritual realm, because Goffman does not allow that it can accrue ritual power by the exercise of dramatic competence. Yet a person is still no more than his performances, as Goffman declares - so far as he is social - even when nearly all of these may rely on indulgent audiences who are content to give him the benefit of the doubt at all times, simply assuming he is "really" the person he may be only ever sporadically hinting at in his conduct.

Charles Darwin (1904) thought that "the far greater number of the movements of expression, and all the most important ones, are ... innate or inherited ... and ... cannot be said to depend on the will of the individual" (p. 375). People, he said, are born with their codes, and these have evolved in the species from three vocabularies: the habitual expressions of gratification, these gratification expressions reversed, and the reactions like blushing that seem to be involuntary. The overall code is effortlessly understood, while being very hard to describe (this, as Hymes (1975), following Labov, has pointed out, is a common problem of many human behaviours; it is easier to repeat conduct than interpret it, and easier to interpret than to report it). Darwin is often understood as saying that, since persons inherit a lexicon of facial and gestural expression, they are not free to improvise new variations on atavistic themes. But his own argument, that the code has evolved, implies that it is still evolving, and is therefore still changing. Darwin's interest, I think, was with the repertoire of signals rather than the use to which they may be put socially, and he must be right in thinking that no person could reinvent the whole code any more than he could devise a new verbal language that had no old elements. As such, however, he is really more concerned with the parameters for conduct, and the histories of these, than with conduct styles and their meanings for persons. So Darwin, who, more than any other writer on expressive



behaviour, is considered a proponent of the "intrinsic" view (Davis 1975), that outer forms are given by inner causes, is not logically presenting a position that would exclude the possibility that conduct can be original and at the same time meaningful.

Recently Hymes (1975) has made distinctions - between behaviour, conduct, and performance - which depend on how much deliberated expression goes into one or other. Behaviour, such as lying down because one wants to go to sleep, is "behaviour" plain and simple. Conduct is the body "under the aegis of social norms", and the behaviour or conduct of one who "assumes responsibility for presentation" is performance. This taxonomy of conduct has the double attraction of releasing little involuntary behaviours like coughing or scratching from the duty of being significant expression for others, and then of re-investing conscious action with a consciousness that is in danger of being forgotten when performance is called behaviour. But it might be expected that in most social interactions all three modes will coexist with just one emphasized at any given moment, and the nearer one gets to seeing behaviour as performed the more will it be necessary to consider that the expressive idiom is controllable. So what Hymes does is grade conduct from relatively uncontrolled to highly controlled, or, in my terms, from unpossessed to totally possessed.

It is interesting to note here what the costs might be for being uncontrolled when one should be controlled or possessed. Ernest Becker (1962) indicts depressives, for instance, for not "putting forth a convincing self" that would oblige others to show deference, since "power over others consists in presenting an infallible self and in commanding dextrous performance of deference." Depressives, then, and other mentally ill persons, for whatever reason, may abandon the control of their social conduct; and so one would anticipate that this could bring in its train multiple interactional sanctions that, to be coped with, would require an increased level of the control whose lack invited the sanctions in the first place. It is not hard to see, then, how persons in this predicament might seek to regain control in interaction by refusing to play a reciprocal self to those of others. So loss of control may have far-reaching effects, and similarly its maintenance may be all that allows a person to remain the person he could be. Yukio Mishima (1979) states this latter position from the completely different perspective of the samurai warrior's ethical code, when he writes of the seventeenth century samurai, Jocho Yamamoto:

Belief is resolution. Resolution must be tested daily over many years. Apparently, Jocho makes a distinction between major beliefs and minor beliefs. In other words, one must nurture major beliefs in one's daily life so that at the moment of decision to act they may be carried out effortlessly, spontaneously. Minor beliefs are the philosophy that governs the trivia of day-to-day existence. Prosper Merime ....

Once remarked that "in fiction there must be a theoretical basis to the most minute details. Even a single glove must have its theory." This is true not only of novelists. While we live and enjoy life, we must always approach even the smallest matters theoretically, exercising our judgement and making decisions. Otherwise, the framework of our life collapses, and sometimes even our greatest beliefs are violated.

This is a call for the "great expressive responsibility" of Goffman's Shetland islanders, one which is re-echoed in yet another realm by Stanislavsky with his idea of the "subtext" that works as a clear but hidden theory informing every element of stage conduct.

I have now shown how conduct is able to be far more voluntary than some of Darwin's readers have led themselves to suppose, and also how some passages of conduct can be regarded as performance, and I have found another way of approaching my central proposition that a person becomes himself in his clearest definition only when his performance is highly deliberate. Deliberation, or control, is the other side of the coin of an (inconceivable) amuk possession. First of all, a person must be taken over by himself, but at the same time he will only carry himself across to others if his possession is in his full control, and what does the controlling is the possession, who is, therefore, the person.

Now the microanalysts Birdwhistell and Scheflen, who have spent the major part of long and distinguished scientific careers analysing filmed interactions, go much further than Hymes. Neither have any doubt that behaviour at all times is not wholly interpretable in terms of its reciprocation with other behaviours in whatever social system it is observed in.

This behaviour includes coughing, scratching, and lying down to sleep. The extreme alertness and rapidity of synchronic integration - as displayed in Birdwhistell's and Scheflen's films - is ample evidence to support an assertion that all behaviour is performance. There is simply no doubt that the communication system of an interaction is of great cybernetic subtlety. But most of the conduct is nearly always out of its interactants' awareness: the control is unknowing control. Control by enacted subtext or by theory, then, must be categorized as conscious control, whose possibility is of course vouchsafed by the existence of huge control to build on. Pure uncontrol, in this light, is controlled behaviour informed by "incoherent" theory and the microanalysts doubt its possibility. Thus Scheflen's (1973) film of a schizophrenic girl and McDermott's (1977) film of "disorderly" school children do not show an absence of organised self presentation but rather the presence of disorganisation in terms of the rules of the given interactional system. The so-called disorganised conduct is in fact very finely dovetailed into reciprocal interactional conduct, so my notion of the control of possession should be amended to mean "consistent" and "appropriate" control of possession which is, of course, fashionable control.

Notwithstanding findings such as I have cited, many people strongly resist the idea that the behaviour which

would be most true to the behaving person is the most performed, for Anglo-American culture generally condemns performers on the grounds that they disguise their real selves, and the idea that honesty and tact depend heavily on the skill to perform is likewise anathema in some quarters.

This nexus of attitudes, hostile to performers, I associate with the doctrine of natural expression that Goffman so effectively exposes in Gender Advertisements. The self, according to this doctrine, cannot help but express itself how it must, according to its nature, and if there is anything that can be done about it then this should not be done, for the purpose of expression is to convey a "real" self that would be violated in performative "translation". This ultra-psychological or biological view of persons, of course, is diametrically opposed to the radically sociological view set forth here, that if there is a real self it is conjured into existence by the competence of its performance.

My own view is that those who would be more controlled in their conduct will tend to weigh their actions with significations that go beyond them, which means that the performer takes his social life more seriously than the more serious psychological person who has no time for theatricality. The performer, therefore, must be a more completely socialised person than he who refuses consciousness of his performances, and the nature of this socialization is always, as it was in the cases of Yamamoto and Mishima, that it strives to design life to be worthy of its designer,

an endless cycle of creation by self to create self that, in the Samurai's case, and in Mishima's too, comes to perfection in ritual death.

Possession for Yamamoto meant possession by the samurai spirit, and this was not only easily prevented by any lapse of conduct but was only possible if the performance was severely correct, whatever the inner emotional state. For the English gentleman, too, there is an analogous possession, by the spirit of the "gentleman", whose playing of honourable games is more important than his other conduct, and for whom the softening of his stiff upper lip would be a moral detumescence. In both these cases and in all other cases where the stress is on expressive responsibility, the kind of the possession is totally dependent on the manner of this possession. But there are persons who stubbornly refuse to give their performances of themselves a central place in their own worlds. Mystics and other inner-oriented individuals - at least the sincere ones - would be of this type. Of them it might be said that they are looking for sources of possession by some other means than by becoming possessed, from which it inevitably follows that, in bungling, abstracted fashion (dependent for its continuity on the tact of those who must experience it) they seem to be possessed by a role such as the "searcher", who in this world is not of it. An extremely sociological being like Yukio Mishima, on the other hand, is of this world entirely, especially when he takes leave of it.

## Natural Conduct

Andre Gide (1967) describes a friend:

He expresses himself so well that one is suspicious; his voice takes on just the inflection he wants; his gestures are never involuntary; it took me some time, I confess, to admit that it could all be genuine.

Here Gide registers a common suspicion of a naturalness that looks too performed, but I think this suspicion actually lends force to my proposition that effective dramatization in interaction is the same as ritualization by possession. This is because possession, to look like what it is, must give itself away as a state whose control requires constant vigilance, for the possession that seems to be in full possession of itself is rather too easily only seen as possession by a self who would act self-possession. (When one can see the vigilance like an aura, around the possession, one gets a sense of the vertiginous drop that is possible into uncontrolled behaviour. Janis Joplin and Maria Callas never failed to electrify audiences perhaps just because they walked their respective high wires with ever such a slight suggestion of imbalance.) So being natural - or being socially literate to a high degree - is, as Evreinoff (n.d.) recognized, "a science necessitating long years of training, experience, and education ..." Elizabeth Burns (1972) is also quite clear that naturalness is not natural: "Natural behaviour in any period is judged not by any criterion of spontaneity but by its conformity to norms that have been learned" (p.162). So this natural conduct

is actually performed in accordance with complex rules, and the very difficulty of this performance is acknowledged by the belief that if the conduct is flawless it must excite suspicion.

Naturalness, however, is not identical to other forms of controlled possession. It is that kind of self possession in which the self, that in possessing is possessed, is nonetheless thoroughly in thrall to the rules of its social context. This, then, is the one creative form of conduct in interaction that seeks to create nothing new: the natural person in being possessed by his ideal of naturalness is only natural to the degree that he competently controls his conduct to conform to the received rules for naturalness. Yet, even for the extraordinarily socialized and constructed person who is natural, it is the precision of control in the possession that permits that precision of his definition. It is very difficult to be natural, then, and that this is so must be why the term is singular praise for an individual's conduct, which is not made any easier to perform by the cultural myth that natural means unforced, free and easy, and spontaneous. (The tense would-be performer of naturalness - because of this myth - must find also that his very tension is dissuasive of his ability to be natural.)

As I remarked in Chapter V, Goffman has repeatedly said that what is essentially human may only be the competence to look human. For the purposes of his analyses he has regarded



such competence, or acting ability, as an evenly distributed capacity throughout interactions. But, of course, abilities vary, and, in Anglo-American culture, those who become possessed in an especially controlled and creative way stand out from the crowd. This is true in the acting profession, where the laurels go to the virtuosi, as well as in everyday life, where the personable person is valued more highly than the person who "does not know how to behave." But it is possible to learn how to behave, and, though there is a reluctance to concede that worthy humanness can be inculcated into persons by training alone, institutions like boys' preparatory and public schools, girls' finishing schools, Borstals, and mental hospitals, for instance, are all built on an accepted premiss that behaviour can be trained to look bred or well-bred. However, the very unwillingness to admit that persons can be coached to look human may issue from an excessive deference to ritual worth, with the deference being given here specifically to what is taken to be the part of humanness that fees cannot buy. In practice too, ritual worth is often rescued for the trainees by the adoption of the notion that only suitable persons will benefit from training. Thus U.S. Marine neophytes have the Marine ideology drilled into them by ritual insults (Flynn, 1977) but only because "really" they were Marines since their conception. Any training then, is likely to be premised on the assumption that persons can be remade, the faces of the remade persons being saved by a complementary assumption

that all along they were, "underneath", what they end up as. In this way Anglo-American culture seals naturalness from charges of unnaturalness even as it goes to work at manufacturing natural soldiers, natural nurses, or, even more radically, born gentlemen.

So if naturalness is a performance of not-performing, which as Elizabeth Burns says would be "devalued" (Burns 1972) were its "composition" detected, as it always is by the microanalysts, what do interactants feel about it? When the tone of an interaction is "natural", the interactants themselves may feel, I think, that what they are not doing is performing. So in a "natural interaction" persons are a part of social life, not apart from it. They will be involved with one another so harmoniously that they may not know themselves to be physically separated. They may "lose themselves" so completely in these interactions as afterwards to be able to say that they forgot themselves. But in unnatural interactions they will feel awkward, out of place, uncomfortable, strained, bored, put upon, and always acutely aware of their own presence, which awareness is precisely what can disable a natural interaction, coming as it does from elements in the interaction which would not have been perceived if it had succeeded in becoming natural. In unnatural interactions, then, people know perfectly well that their attempted naturalness is totally performed. Burns (1972) describes the elements that bring on unnaturalness as those which are "entirely unprecedented and fraught with

consequentiality." In this connection she advances a most persuasive reason for the fashioning of conduct that I discussed in Chapter V: conduct has to become patterned in order to relieve interactants of the task of continuously interpreting the "unprecedented" into the "acceptable". So it might be concluded that, when patterns coincide or are mutually understood, naturalness is a possibility, but that, if they jar against one another, unnaturalness is almost inevitable. Thus from another direction yet there emerges once again the notion that naturalness has nothing to do with the nature of specific units of behaviour as such, and everything to do with its interpretation as natural. Now follow three examples of natural conduct, taken from the repertory company. The first two show how "perfectly natural" behaviour of the actors is both very complex and specific to their culture. The last example shows how easily an outsider can misunderstand what is natural to other people:

The first time the DSM produces the cleaning materials for "Work Time", Martini and Billy begin to act the fool with the Jay Cloths. Martini holds his cloth over his middle and mimes the pelvic grinding of a stripper. With a voiceless cry he flicks the cloth away and up, and this sets Billy off waving two cloths above his head like a cheerleader at an American football match. Big Nurse laughs at these antics. Now that he has her attention, Martini advances on Big Nurse with his cloth draped over his upraised right hand. Like a conjuror he casts a spell over the cloth before smatching it off his hand which holds a cigarette packet. Martini, Billy, and Big Nurse seem very relaxed together. All this took place in the five or six seconds that elapsed while B checked the loose head of a broom.

In the studio all the cast are spaced out in a circle and B is giving them some elaborate timing schedules. Harding pulls a cigarette out of his pack and then sees that Big Nurse wants one too. He puts his cigarette in his mouth and pulls out a second one which he throws to Big Nurse who catches it without withdrawing her attention from B. Candy notices and makes a gesture with her hand to her mouth. Harding throws her a cigarette right across the room. Others too now look briefly to Harding, who ends up feeding the whole company cigarettes. At no point, however, is B interrupted in his instruction-giving.

Two social workers arrive in the office with three youths whom they are hoping to place with the company for a number of hours of "Community Service". It is striking how automatically the actors identify with the youths and take up a critical attitude to the social workers. In response to being asked what jobs there are for the youths to carry out, the administrator says, "Well, to begin with, there's selling the programmes...." The female social worker jumps at this. "Ian, you'd like to sell programmes, wouldn't you?" she asks one of the youths. He looks noncommittal but the social worker turns from him back to the administrator as though a knotty problem had been elegantly solved. After the social workers have gone, much disgust is expressed about the way the youths had been treated. The business of telling someone to do something with only the merest pretence at involving them in a democratic decision is singled out for loud censure. What seemed to have been most annoying was the social worker's assumption that she was in harmony with the actors.

No one is more of a specialist in the job of seeming for other people to be a natural person than an actor. So I close this section with a note from my observations of actresses in their after-hours club. The first thing the outsider notices is the insistent "unnaturalness" of their behaviour. Why is this? I think that, as in the case of camp conduct, this apparent unnaturalness protects these actresses from their trained perceptiveness. Actresses'

voices are often coated with a sugary, husky, theatricality in which vowels are drawn out and all the tones are given a mock melodiousness that would ape elocution enunciation were it not done with a winning smile. The word "Darling" is a universal term of address that might be intimately whispered or shrieked the length of a crowded, drunken room, and it is used as much as is the word "Sir" in military organizations. These and all sorts of other behaviours which together exaggerate and mock with a flagrant falsity of manner can be seen as deliberate self-parodies not unlike "camp", offered up for the fun of sociability to those who know very well from which realm comes the actress and how perfect (or not so perfect) can be her control of possession. Here is a social use of an almost "naturalized" type of unnaturalness, resorted to, as it were, to avoid the embarrassment of natural conduct between professionals who know conduct cannot be natural.

### Morality of Performance

Natural behaviour is always good behaviour and all performances necessarily create moral situations. "What is expected is the intelligible representation of moral situations which are usually private," says Barthes (1973) but only of theatre and wrestling matches, whereas I consider this to be also true of many everyday interactions. (Nevertheless, it is on the stage that performances may most easily be experimented with, because there, having been stripped of what Goffman calls the "dull footage", they have no practical

consequences and are also easy to aestheticize, which is, perhaps, one reason why they are there.) A good performance, says Barthes, involves an "emptying out of interiority to the benefit of exterior signs," which implies the responsibility to an audience that Bauman (1975) notes: "Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communication competence" (p 293). The performer, then, not only creates a realm in which good and bad can be seen clearly but he is also good or bad as a performer. These two things are connected but for the moment I wish to concentrate on good or bad performing.

Abrahams (1974) constructs a typology of ghetto performances in everyday life, and it includes styles such as "talking smart" (serious conflict talk), "putting down" (aggressive talk), "putting on" (manipulative talk), "playing", "sounding", and "talking shit" (non-serious contest talk). Those performers who excel in these modes, who "walk their walk" and "talk their talk", enjoy the highest social status or "rep". Here the "good" of performance is lodged less in its content (so far as that can be separated) than in its competence. "Talking shit" and talking that talk" build up a street image, and in the street "one must dramatize constantly." The reward of high rep is to have many friends, upon whom one can call for goods and services. In the British West Indies, too, Abrahams (1970) observed that all public activities were regarded as performances and

"evaluated as performances of varying appropriateness and effectiveness." Again, the highly competent performer is the moral exemplar of his community. Similarly, it could be argued, accomplished playwrights and novelists in Anglo-American middle-class culture are accorded the respect due to morally worthy persons because they have the capacity to seriously entertain, the entertainment being the more serious the more it opens up questions of right and wrong, approaching at the far end of a seriousness spectrum the genre of tragedy, in which men and gods (or godlike forces such as destiny) come into direct interaction. Respect is earned, then, by performance.

In an interview, Lynn Fontanne (Funke and Booth, 1961) explicitly says that there is no qualitative difference between performance in everyday life and performance on stage: "Sociability is composed of the very essence of what you give to the theatre, what you give to a part. For instance, this interview is going to take it out of me for tonight." Bearing this in mind, one can now see that the strong rule among actors that it is wrong not to give your all to an audience might also be a rule of everyday life, where, when another person withholds his self in interaction, this can be taken as a snub, an offence, a slighting of ritual worth. It is good, then, to perform well (and performance raises questions of what is good and bad). So the morality of interaction holds that persons should give themselves to one another to the best of their abilities. Poor performers mean poor

people. From my fieldnotes I extract the following paragraph which makes this point:

Giving his notes about the previous night's performance, B admonishes Billy for having insufficient strength, and Billy just nods. Then B says that Nurse Flynn was reading the report on McMurphy as if to morons, and that this was embarrassingly bad. Finally he accuses himself of leaving Harding "drowning in the shallows" because he mixed up some lines and gave Harding ambiguous cues. At no point during these criticisms, or during any others that are given in all three productions, is there every any suggestion that poor or inadequate performances must not be improved so far as is humanly possible.

Yet, even if they are not representing conduct that goes against prevailing moral ideologies, do good performances inevitably mean good people? Genuine performance, I think I have established, is often seen as being far more than the behavioural manifestations of a "mechanical marvel". But there are persons who, apart from life, never become a part of it. Robert Service (1980) wrote: "The world has been a stage for me, and I have played the parts my imagination conceived. Rarely have I confronted reality: it seems as if I have never lived at all, just dreamed and played at living." And Marianne Faithful (in an interview with Mick Brown, Penthouse, Vol 14 No 12) tells an interviewer: "I would have loved to have been a great actress but I realise that I act all the time anyway. I even act with people I know very well." The difficulty for these two people is that they cannot get themselves possessed by people with whom they can identify. (I say much more on this subject in Chapter IX.) From this it follows that the actor who never loses consciousness of



himself acting will never, if this consciousness shows, seem to be alive, and, since he will always appear to be role-playing, he will be perceived as failing to be his "genuine" self, and therefore amoral, and if the consciousness does not show he will be amoral to himself alone, to whom, of course, the consciousness does show. So the morality of performance is that it should not only be the best that a person can put on but that it also should seem to be "owned by" or to be the "personal possession" of the performing person. Moral realms are opened up in performance, and I suggest now that, since morality is about "how to behave" these realms are constituted by the dramatic renderings of competence problems, or the performance morality at a meta level.

### The Framing of Performance

I have shown that conduct is performance and that the possessions by which people perform themselves - opening up thereby ritual realms which in turn have interest inasmuch as they deal with questions of performance - are controlled into being what they are, in the case of natural conduct, by having to appear as needing no undue control, and, in the general case of deliberate performance, by the moral rule that a performer ideally should give his all. Now I shall change the perspective, to note and comment on some of the "frames" that are put upon possession.

The framing devices of performances in theatres are easy

to list: raised staging, unobstructed visibility, favourable lighting, curtain or black-out "brackets" (Goffman 1975), acting conduct of an aestheticized kind, separation from auditorium. These are found everywhere in social life. The pulpit, the lecturer's podium, the judge's bench, and so on, all borrow from the staging norms of the theatre so as to set off and exalt the leading performer even before he opens his mouth. But framing devices may also be found in less staged social situations, and it could be said that their design is a limit on the performative conduct. Bauman and Sherzer (1974) insist, in this vein, that everyday performances are highly dependent on their situations and Abrahams (1972) says that "the energies of the performer must be matched in great part by the responsive energies of the audience." In other words, the audience is a further framing device; an attentive audience obviously would encourage performances that would be discouraged by groans and yawns (in Chapter VIII, I say more on this topic). Bauman (1975) actually adopts Goffman's concept of frame and his review of folklore literature turns up a wide variety of metacommunicative keyings that serve to separate performances from non-performances. These include special codes, special openings and closings, special language, special style devices, special prosodic patterns, and special vocalizations. Carey (1976) has further found that a very large number of modulations take place in their paralinguistic channels when Presidential candidates make television broadcasts, and these changes consistently occur when

candidates go from "Off-Mike/Off-Camera" to "On-Mike/On-Camera" and vice versa. It seems safe to say, then, that frames for performance are multiply-cued in interactions, and that a performance cannot happen unless it is framed, for without a frame it will be regarded as uncontrolled behaviour, though he who performs may actually frame himself, by voice alteration and so on, as he goes along. The more formal the performance the stronger the taboo against breaking into it from outside the frame. In a theatre, for example, a person persisting in talking across the show will be asked to leave and, if that fails, will be bodily removed. But right down at the level of ordinary conversation, he who interrupts without "good" reason is considered rude, and poor performers, unless their ritual worth is bolstered by externally applied statuses, need not expect to be heard out every time they begin a peroration. (Poor stage actors, too, perforce watch another show besides their own, of the audience filtering away through the exits as the play goes on.) Rules against interruption and non-attention are very well explained by Erving Goffman, yet it might add to an understanding of the sense a person has of more than interactionally utilitarian forces upholding such rules to see that performance, even of the lowly type called for in "making conversation", is not only communication of lexical items, voice qualities, gestures, expressions, posture, costume, physical character, and so on, but, more than that, the creation of a world in which the audience might lose itself as it never could in interaction

viewed only as a communication system. So it may be that attention in interaction honours framed worlds rather than persons, though it will have to be to their envoys that appreciation is shown. The following two examples from the theatre, I think, show how it might be the "realm" and not the person that is deferred to:

While rehearsals were in progress, visitors such as poster designers and lighting technicians would lower their voices or stop talking altogether when they entered the auditorium, even though they never looked directly at the stage.

If people wished to speak to the director when he was in the stage area, they would wait at the edge of the area for him to walk to them, whereas, away from the stage, it would nearly always be the other way round, the "suppliant" approaching the director.

The framing of performance is one of the most obvious features operating to control possession. That it is found at every level of conduct argues that orderly performances are protected from disorderly interruptions, but only in such a way that what is framed does not itself look like supra-interruption, on the order of, say, sudden epileptic seizure, whose very unframed suddenness might be a part of what affrights its audience. The shock of unframed performance is reported by Sudnow (1967) who, during a period of hospital research, saw 200 deaths, only one of which was not a "hospital death". This exception was a shooting in the Casualty Department. Sudnow says that, after the shooting, nurses, well used to unconscious, dying, and dead persons, stood stunned and apparently helpless around the shot victim, and this could only be because the victim was

improperly framed and therefore uncontrolled.

Not all frames are immediately apparent around the performance. The frame of rehearsal is one that is less obviously a frame than, for example, a raised stage, but it does serve as a buffer between the performers in a relatively uncontrolled state and the same performers after being controlled by their rehearsal.

### Rehearsal for Possession

I shall now discuss some of the characteristics of theatrical rehearsal, which is the period between non-possession and full-enough possession, into which unknown persons must venture with special care, since here they are in the presence of selves in disarray, which must be looked at without too much judgement, or too little appreciation, or too much interest, and with the right amount of respect, as it is outside rehearsals but at a lesser pitch.

Many actors are unhappy being watched while rehearsing and those powerful enough within the profession usually refuse outsiders permission to sit on rehearsals. Zalk (1972) calls rehearsal an "intensely private phenomenon," and perhaps this is because the process by which an actor makes contact with a character who is not there depends upon such delicate adjustments to normal interactional attention structures that these latter risk being upset completely by strange pairs of eyes. The complicated work of feeling

a way into a part involves the actor in exposing his actor's mind as he experiments with gestures and inflexions, so it is not surprising that he hesitates to welcome witnesses to this exposure, the very one his whole professional life is about not showing to audiences. Preparation, then, apart from the hard physical labour required, is a testing time for an actor's self. Furthermore, if Evreinoff is right in asserting that "the main thing for us is not to be ourselves. This is the theatrical imperative of our souls", it can be appreciated how worrying the period of preparation can be for an actor who, for long working hours, is hovering between several selves, not really able to be any one of them. Preparation in the theatre is not taken lightly. The constant call for longer rehearsals and more thorough training shows that possession is not thought, by those that know it professionally, to happen at a throw of a switch. The control of possession, then, begins long before it can occur, and perhaps this is why most persons only ever learn to be one self, because they lack the time and application to multiply their selves.

Rehearsals in the theatre nearly always follow the same schedule. After an initial directorial introduction to the playworld, the blocking is gradually gone through, before the speech is internalised by the actors. Then scenes are repeated and repeated until acceptable performance standards are reached. Finally, run-throughs of separate acts and then

of the whole play smooth out discontinuities, so that, in miniature, the rehearsal period resembles a socialization process, but into a playworld, within which the actors must come to feel at ease before they can perform. Even through a "run", just as in the course of a professional career, the feeling of coming to be "at ease" may go on increasing, and this feeling actually assists in the elaboration of conduct that in its turn assists the possession the coming into which brought on the feeling of ease in the first place. Thus:

Rutley's fellow catatonic, who told me after the first night that he "did not know what he was doing half the time," has now taken to writing in the ward book during those periods when he is stood by the Nurses' Station. He writes abusive comments about Big Nurse, totally in character, and tells me, after one week of this, that he now finds it impossible not to write in the book.

During the second week of the run, Bromden starts acting in just his bare feet. B asks him how he feels about this. Bromden replies that he does not understand how he ever felt right wearing shoes and socks "in the ward."

McMurphy has added a new refinement to the exercises sequence at the beginning of the first Group Therapy session. He looks around, open-mouthed, at his fellow patients, incredulous at their pathetic movements, and he slowly mimics them as if he cannot believe in what they are doing. Then he finds himself facing the orderly Warren, at whom he now directs a big insincere smile. Warren frowns, so McMurphy begins to do a sort of twist dance step with his face slackened off into an expressive parody of "being sent". I ask B about this later on, and he says he just found himself doing it one night.

From the kind of high-speed socialization a rehearsal is, I think two themes common to all socialization processes can now be abstracted: that new roles are difficult to learn,

and that, nonetheless, new roles can be learnt. The control of possession, then, is usually guaranteed for a given person by lengthy procedures of increasing familiarisation with a new self. It is inevitable, in a society where the division of labour is very fine, that all kinds of training periods will be allotted to neophytes everywhere. In this way, the dramatic abilities of persons are implicitly recognized, and those persons who make their various grades are allowed to feel that they are different people on graduation.

Looking the part and being the sort of person who ought to play the part can be convergent demands on a person, so that, as I showed in Chapter IV, a nurse who disobeys any of the minute prescriptions that govern both her dress and her demeanour will not be allowed on a ward, and one, who, as it is said, "naturally" obeys the rules of conduct, gives all the evidence that ever can be obtained that through and through she is a nurse, until at the maximum of "naturalness" she will be referred to (as I have already noted of such persons) as a "born nurse".

Thus formal possession of self in both small and large society is treated as hard to control, but as controllable, and the process of this control is rehearsal.

Following on from these ideas about the rehearsal frame, now come some rather more different observations about the working life of professional actors. These lead to a general suggestion about controlled stage performances



and everyday life performances, that both should control any signs of their being controlled.

### The Everyday Life of Actors

It might be thought that actors, who must show to audiences persons who can be effortlessly interpreted, would study people who are not actors. This is recommended in a few drama schools but the norm of the group I researched was that such study is voyeuristic. In fact, the director of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, which is set in a lunatic asylum, explained to me that the cast would not be visiting a mental hospital because the patients "have enough on as it is".

On the basis of my limited data, I can say that a significant number of actors (at least) learn most from fashionable and successful actors, in particular the ones with whom they have a chance to work. As I said in Chapter V, a natural selection is going on here. Actors who do well with the public are emulated. So the public sees not so much studies from life as copies of vogue styles, and this of course is true of any artistic field in which the dominant fashion, just because it is a fashion, is the only fashion, until replaced because it has begun to look like only a fashion.

Modelling themselves on successes, to whom do actors turn for evaluation of their efforts? Directors much less than instructors in drama schools offer skilled criticism, and this is taken very seriously; the remarks influential

directors have made about an actor are quoted in almost reverential tones. Criticism through reviews, though, is perfunctory, dealing out shorthand praise or damnation, and laudatory mentions make only temporary impact. So actors are without the kind of intelligent and loving mirror that would guide them to better acting, for the applause of audiences is the crudest and least particular response by which to measure dramatic effectiveness. In this respect, actors share the fate of other members of the wider culture, that tact allows them their faults.

So it is necessary for the actor who would improve (and he will not survive in the profession unless he does) to become ever more discerning of himself. This sets him apart from non-actors, as does the further requirement, should he wish to be a serious performer, that he explore his emotions and sensations as near their limit as he dare, sometimes a requirement incompatible with one no less stringent that he take the utmost care of his artistic instrument, his body.

In general, stage actors work in comfortless rooms for long concentrated hours in the company of other actors. They lead careers that have neither security nor continuity, and if they are successful they work in the unsocial evening hours. They are only ever as good as their last performances, and must compete in a labour market where the majority at any one time are out of work. Their main employers are the repertory companies, and (in Great Britain) these are a

reservoir of talent for the TV companies, yet are not financially reimbursed. The actor's threadbare existence in repertory, then, usually can only be exchanged for the joyless, factory-produced acting of TV, or the occasional short period of the shooting of a film. (And, as the years of his career go by, the actor will find it harder to re-join everyday life.) These are the conditions that prevail behind every performance an audience warms to, and, such is the actor's art, these conditions are rarely guessed from the performances.

So, just as the idea of possession can be hidden behind cultured myths of naturalness, so are actors' possessions, those of a race apart from everyday life, controlled, like all possessions, I suggest, so as to look before they look like anything else, as if they are not controlled. Any possession, then, just like the natural possession should look like an expression whose form is given, even as it is given this form.

Now I come to perhaps the most important kind of control in interaction, the one that actually determines the form of the possession, and I discuss this with reference to David Cole's (1975) concept of "rounding" (the bringing of maximum ritual presence into an interaction).

### Rounding and Control

A controlled person is not a person in interactional abeyance as it were - an absence of a person - but a person

whose manner of control precisely shows his matter. This can be illustrated by imagining a person as tightly controlled as he can be. Even he conveys a person, generally in Anglo-American culture described as straightlaced or uptight. Among friends this "cold fish" is likely to receive gentle encouragement to let go a bit or to let his hair down, with assurances that "we don't need to stand on ceremony." If he fails to do so, or to not seem as if he wants to do so, he will not long have fellow interactants calling themselves his friends. This clearly shows that to all intents and purposes the person controlled is actually a function of the control a person has. Unyielding control goes with a thoroughly rigid person and is control in the sense of strength, not of flexibility and subtlety.

John Gielgud (Funke and Booth, 1961) says that in a perfect performance a person is conscious both of the person he would be possessed by and of how he should control this possession: "The mind is clearly divided between the imaginative impulse and the deliberate execution of the part, with nothing allowed to distract one from these two processes, which should be complementary - the one feeding and sustaining the other." So it can be understood how uncontrolled people in having an insufficient faculty of control also lose commensurate personness up to the point where a completely uncontrolled person is not a person. Having no self-control is not different to having no self to control. The possession of control, then, is always the control of possession.

Possession at its height consequently requires the most expert control. Cole (1975) says that when these heights are reached performers "round" on audiences, that is, having shamanistically gone to the illud tempus, they come back as hungans. The truest of all theatrical events are constituted by roundings, Cole believes, and these are those encounters between performers, for audiences, when, as Sidney Poitier says (Funke and Booth, 1961,) "There is not a theatre and there is not a stage," and then the realm the actor comes from is there for the audience to enter. An example of rounding, taken from my own field-work, follows:

This afternoon, during repeated run throughs of the group therapy scenes, B, playing the recalcitrant McMurphy, did not seem very involved in the proceedings. One result of this was that a note of frustration entered into Big Nurse's coaching of her patients, so that her bland patter began to sound quite oppressive. While she was coming to the conclusion of one speech B pulled a pack of cards from his pocket, and I do not think anyone who glimpsed this was sure that he was fully inside the play. Big Nurse paused. B was holding the cards in both hands, bending them back ready for a zip shuffle. He looked up at Big Nurse, at this moment either as the director of the play - and as such unimpressed by Big Nurse's playing - or as McMurphy showing Big Nurse that he had no respect at all for her psychiatric theories. There was a confused silence. It occurred to me that B had used the cast's uncertainty as to whether or not he was in character to create the very feeling of uncertainty that should be in the air at just this moment on stage. And as this occurred to me I realised that the very same thought would also be occurring to the others. But before I had a chance to relax, and before the actors could release the tension that had just crept into their playing, the cards in McMurphy's hands suddenly all flipped into the air and cascaded to the floor. Big Nurse suppressed her reaction of flinching and Cheswick, on B's left, pulled away from

him with a start and then froze, in character for the first time that afternoon. B got up and walked towards Big Nurse with a faint smile on his lips. It was still possible to see him both as McMurphy and as the director, in the latter case compelling the cast to register that he had jolted them all up to a more intense level of acting. At this point, however, the distinction vanished, because if B was the director the director was also McMurphy at all times. Big Nurse was obviously unsure of what B would do, as she and everybody else knew that he was quite capable of hitting her hard. Her professional training won out and she stood her ground, but in such a way that it was obvious she was thinking that if she did not block McMurphy, here and now, she would go down herself. B had clearly summoned a deep response from Big Nurse who had incorporated her response directly into the character she was playing, thereby intensifying it so that it now seemed to have its own life, one that was stronger than that of the actress supporting it. For a few seconds, then, everybody in the room was lifted out of the rehearsal studio and transported to Ken Kesey's ward, and in the process the tiredness of the day seemed to be completely dispelled.

It is probably true to say, then, that rounding is only possible for persons who have the dramaturgical talent to so revise their appearance as to fit perfectly into an intelligible ritual realm.

All art of course rounds on persons who lose themselves in it (I enlarge on this in Chapter 1X) and in everyday life people continually achieve art-like status for one another, becoming worlds effortlessly entered, and sometimes mutually, as happens for Rosamond and Lydgate in George Eliot's (1958) Middlemarch:

Lydgate was quick in anticipating her. He reached the whip before she did, and turned to present it to her. She bowed and looked at him: he of course was looking at her and their eyes met with that peculiar meeting which is never arrived at by effort, but seems like a sudden divine clearance of haze. I think Lydgate turned

a little paler than usual, but Rosamond blushed deeply and felt a certain astonishment. After that, she was really anxious to go, and did not know what sort of stupidity her uncle was talking of when she went to shake hands with him.

Such mutual roundings are like sudden glimpses into unsuspected vastnesses, and it follows from this that the person who makes a strong impression on others does not do that so much as create a larger world for them to enter. Thus a woman who looks as if she comes from a world no more mysterious than a television soap-opera will not round on people with such power as, say, Jane Austen, when she seems in her ritual realm to make behaviour explain itself in ways that set the reader free from stupidity and confusion, as, it eventually turns out, Rosamond Vincey could not for Lydgate.

Among actors on stage rounding can call forth other roundings, as happened in the fieldwork example above, and such roundings are totally involving for audiences. Possession at this level of near-perfect execution seems on the verge of getting out of hand as it escalates in these interactions, and the actors' ritual power may become awe-inspiring at the limit. Then the watched physical protagonists, having refined their conduct into a series of iconic images, can seem to be encountering each other as if they only stand in for absent giants, so that a couple's argument, for example, might look like a fundamental quarrel between men and women, which is how such arguments often seem in the novels of D. H. Lawrence.

So when - safely outside its frame - people watch conduct in stalking grounds charged with danger, they enter into other people who seem capable of stalking one another to the death. What is happening here for audiences may be very similar to what happens for a writer of fiction:

Writing becomes a search for a poly-personality, a means of living several destinies, of penetrating into others, of communicating with them. The writer becomes conscious of the world he brings to life, he is its consciousness and he thus escapes from the ordinary limits of the self, something which intoxicates his spirit while enriching and sharpening it at the same time.

(Serge, 1972)

Some actors, however, may never round, and different plays will afford different opportunities for performers to round. In everyday life, too, there are those who never succeed in "rising to the occasion" and also those for whom there are very few occasion to rise to. But I am proposing that human attention will not be able to help itself gravitating to such people as Barthes' (1973) wrestlers, because, as he says, "they are, for a few moments, the key which opens Nature, the pure gesture which separates Good from Evil, and unveils the form of a justice which is at last intelligible." Persons who have the very high degree of control that permits this kind of "rounding possession", moreover, may be said to triumph in their interaction, and for them there is no sense whatsoever of their having gone through an ordeal. But, at the opposite extreme from rounding occasions, there will be those which severely test self possession, when a person only just manages to convey



himself as a minimally intelligible ritual being, and these are often interviews or any sort of trial. The interactional scale suggested here, of ordeal to triumph, was one I saw operating very clearly in the theatre. Not only two consecutive nights, but two consecutive acts or even two consecutive scenes could be the one ordeal and the next triumph. I think in everyday life, too, persons are now barely surviving their exposure to others and the next minute coming through encounters, as they say "with flying colours". Control of possession then needs to be very fine, and the minutest adjustments can make the ritual difference between an almost dispossessed ordeal and the triumph of rounding. With this in mind I want to now consider the topic of "live" control and originality, which will conclude this brief review of some of the ways control is applied, and some of the results of it being so applied.

#### Live Control

With the safety-net of editing techniques and re-run capabilities removed, the live performer, who cannot lose his mistakes, can only lose his performance, but may thereby win an involvement by virtue of this alone. So, although a taste for live performance in preference to recorded performance may reflect the high value placed on immediacy and sincerity, perhaps, also, audiences of live shows want proof that the playworld in which they are asked to lose themselves is also worthy of its performers' engrossment. Only the live performer, therefore, so long as he maintains

his control, gives continuous evidence that what possesses him can be possessive.

Distaste for the bogus, the theatrical, the over-rehearsed, the obviously-scripted performance may be the emotion of a presentiment that such performance gives no world to enter through the mechanical movements of a manipulator unless it be a world he does not believe in, or come from, or care about, or want to be involved in himself. If muzak is music without music, then this deadhanded control of routinized possession is the muzak of social life, instantly recognisable in the tired patter of salesmen, politicians, disc jockeys, and hacks of every denomination. Audiences both of professional shows and of less professional everyday life performers may put up with dead conduct but will know live persons when they see them. From this there follows an absolute dictate in social life, that there ever be new forms of conduct, just because the old ones, having been seen before, are not responses to the present. And a person who becomes entirely predictable ceases to qualify as a person, just as, for example, a novelist who starts to repeat himself is said to have lost his inspiration or to have been deserted by his muse. To go further, any science of persons that would aim at exhaustive explanations of conduct under the auspices of determinism might from the foregoing point of view open itself to the charge that in focussing on what can be reduced to the predictable it misses the point that what is most characteristic of persons is their

capacity to transcend themselves. Simmel (1971) elaborates this dialectic in his essay "The Transcendent Character of Life", where he says he had made the "attempt" to conceive of life as:

... something which constantly reaches beyond limits towards its beyond and which finds its essence in this reaching beyond. [This essay] is an attempt to define life in general by way of this transcendence, where by the closure of its individuality form is maintained, but only in order to be broken through by the continuous process. Life finds its essence, its process, in being more-life and more-than-life. Its positive is as such already its comparative.

I am well aware of the logical difficulties involved in the conceptual expression of this way of viewing life. I have tried to formulate it, in full presence of the logical danger, because perchance the level is here attained in which logical difficulties by themselves are insufficient to impel silence - because it is here that the metaphysical root of logic itself draws nourishment.

My own rhetoric of possession can be reduced to a single axiom that is in harmony with the above passage. It would go: "I perform, therefore I am more than what I perform." Always, I am suggesting, the possession, in so far as it is controlled in an appropriate manner, opens a realm which is other than the "figure" cueing it into being and which, in the case of rounding at least, must be beyond any current conceptions of what a person should be. This is a realm that Erving Goffman (1975, p 523) has only approached:

A puppeteer works his strings a yard away from the doll he brings to life. A ventriloquist works his puppet close by so that it can be manipulated from behind and appear to be the actual emitter of sound. A chess player is within easy reach of his pieces, his men, his figures. A stage performer works closer still, since he manipulates his own limbs and his own lips - as, to a degree, we also do in quoting someone during ordinary talk. Where we work in everyday life when speaking for ourselves remains to be considered.

Throughout this thesis I have been engaged in considering "where we work when speaking for ourselves", and I have said that the "place" is a ritual realm whence possessions seem to originate. I have also put forward the idea that a person is a possession, and definitely not a performance played by any other agent than the substance of this performance. His person, the possession, takes its consciousness, then, from human raw material, and outside the possession's consciousness there is no other consciousness, unless it be that of a new and different possession which, as they all do, comes into being by sweeping through all those human appearances the possession can be constituted by, and gathering these to itself, so to speak, in order to transform conduct so that, just as a two-dimensional picture may yield the third dimension of perspective, there may be yielded a ritual realm. My rhetoric of possession thus dispenses with "inner men". What then of the stream of thought that a person keeps to himself? This I term a private possession, whose particular nature is that it feeds on its own consciousness of being unseen: the more conduct gives nothing of a private possession away the more that appearance of giving nothing away is the possession unto its private self. But if the private possession would communicate itself, then it must make public sense, and, more than that, be interesting, if it would be attended to, and if a possession does not make sense, despite that it wishes to, it will be taken as some symptom of some "madness", the label a possession has when it seems deficient in inner reason. (Obviously, a whole social psychology

could be developed out of the idea of possession and its reciprocal "rapture" (which is explained in the chapter after next), and this really ought to be combined with a history of self conception, but in this thesis I have only had time to launch the concepts on their way.)

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE POSSESSED

Possession has now been defined from several different directions, but before I fit the second half of my theory of interaction, "rapture", to this the first, it remains for me to add some explanations of assertions left dangling in the previous three chapters. Therefore my treatment of rapture is postponed to the next chapter.

First of all I shall return to the seminal idea of ritual presence and this time devise a scale that would measure it from "parroting" at the zero end to "loving" at the fully possessed end, and I do this by referring back to the acting experiences of stage actors. Then I amplify my ideas on the consecrated nature of stage space, which I term "ritual space", and this properly follows from presence since I say that ritual space, and even territory, is as it is so far as it is the site of ritual life.

In previous chapters I have tended to slight the role of the audience in possessions, almost implying that a person who would be possessed must, as it were, pull himself up by the bootstraps of his own self consciousness. But of course interaction is not interaction if it is not interactive, and so I note that audiences which are specially attentive will enable performers to enrich their actions while (but I do go into this) disinterested audiences may

diminish or kill possessions.

Presence, then, is not confined to the possessed person, because it can diffuse itself into spacial areas as well as nourish itself on attention. Now I go on to say that occasions themselves, those, that is, which frame ritual life, also become imbued with presence, and these framing occasions are "the rituals of ritual life," such as church services and court hearings. The rituals of ritual life are deferred to in their own right, regardless of their content, and this content may be full ritual life or the opposite when the framing ritual of the ritual life can aptly be described as an "empty ritual". People too, I conclude, can be emptied of their ritual life, so to speak, if - particularly when they are professional actors - they are considered to have only "framed" it. Thus, on stage, actors overmaster the audience but off-stage, having shed their stage possessions, they walk relatively small in contemporary status life. In this sense, they are the dispossessed, but, I argue, so is anyone who will not act. Possession, I imply, is the sign of the human, and all humans are possessed.

### Presence

In Anglo-American culture only a few actors are revered as artists; most enjoy no higher status than that of skilled craftsmen, and their performances are not expected every time to create rapture in an audience, but something less religiously toned, appreciation. In the same way, very few people in everyday life awaken one another

to the miracle of existence, but, nonetheless, they are not gladly received if they breathe death into their interactions by behaving in ways that demand no more appreciation than the voice of the speaking clock. Thus, at the beginning of Under Western Eyes, Joseph Conrad's narrator, a teacher of languages, is rueful when he reflects that his lifelong professional orientation to words has made him view humankind as "not much more wonderful than parrots", and the impression of parroting lines on stage would seem to be at an opposite pole to the one of acting well. Conduct, as I have shown in earlier chapters, should be seen to issue from the inside of a person and not look like a superimposed irrelevance. This, I have argued, is difficult to bring off, precisely because "possession by" is necessarily an "imposition on". But, if imposition were all that possession seemed to be, human parrots would not be as chilling as are for example The Mummy and the Old Man of Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata. In these cases the "possession by" a low form of life causes horrifying diminution just because the possession as imposition is nonetheless regarded as essentially the being who is so possessed. And human parrots are seen as being worse than parrots because they represent the substitution of the human by some lesser life, as does an actor who "sells himself". To reverse the human entropy that leads to the human parrot, Grotowski (1976) advises an actor to free his body "from



every resistance to any psychic impulse", when "he does not sell his body but sacrifices it" and "repeats the atonement", coming "close to holiness".

So it is bad acting that has given acting a bad name, for acting is the absolute requisite for being human at all, and through it only the consummate stage actor can distil what for John Gielgud (Funke and Booth, 1961) is "the essence of important moments". Acting which is good, moreover, creates the ritual presence that is emphatically human.

For the same reason that good acting reaches back to commanding ritual realms, truth itself has greater ritual presence than propaganda, hypocrisy, circumlocution, and so on, whose words in not being meant seem to come from a source that in not meaning what it says does not want to say what it means or be what it is, and that, therefore, is nothing but its own negation. A ritually present person, then, is difficult to overlook when all about him are hedging their selves. So, in a culture where the hedging of selves is a structural necessity (Luhmann, 1979), institutions like theatres, which house and frame performances of ritual presence, might serve as a compensatory device, reminding people both that selves do not always have to be hedged and that an unhedged self is an awesome entity. Conversely, where social selves are meant to be as nearly holy selves as possible, as in England when Oliver Cromwell was Lord Protector, theatres are closed for

trivialising life, and, when holiness is owned by institutionalized religions, the professional actor might expect a lean period, as Benedetti (1976) notes:

The Council of Laodicea (343-381AD) required all clergy present at a festivity to leave the room before actors were allowed to enter. This ecclesiastical antipathy toward actors lasted for over seventeen hundred years; even as late as the fourteenth century Thomas a Becket, who had been friendly toward minstrels while he was Chancellor of the Realm, banned them from his palace once he became Archbishop of Canterbury. Moliere was denied Christian burial in the seventeenth century, and the church ban against actors in France was not lifted until the Revolution.

But ritual presence like any other form of conduct can become stereotyped muzak. To prevent this, an actor, says Grotowski (1976), "must be able to construct his own psychoanalytic language of sounds and gestures in the same way that a great poet creates his own language of words". The demands that Grotowski recommends an actor to make on himself, so as to always be ritually present, are morally stringent:

One must give oneself totally, in one's deepest intimacy, with confidence, as when one gives oneself in love. Here lies the key. Self-penetration, trance, excess; the formal discipline itself - all this can be realised, provided one has given oneself fully, humbly and without defence.

Abrahams (1972) also calls the act of creative performance - but this time in everyday life - "an act of love", the stress being on a giving of self (sharing of possession) which can only be called giving if there is no thought of return. But "giving" is not quite right; rather, energetic competence is fed into interaction so that a world is generated that leads out of the interaction into exactly the same interaction but now charged with ritual presence.

Presence, then, is that type of ritual power which seems to overflow itself.

### Ritual Space

Cole (1975), I think, captures the idea of spilled ritual presence when he describes stage space as "the extent of an uneasiness". Thus the space "claimed by any group of people for a particular activity" (Scheflen 1976) may have a different quality to that of a mere "orientational field" as Scheflen designates it.

Scheflen (1972) has observed how a person crossing the territories of a strange group lowers his head, curls his shoulders, unprotrudes his chest, holds his hands close to or in front of his body, and keeps his eyes to himself. But Scheflen has not considered that this "behaviour of territorial passage" might have less to do with the act of stepping onto a piece of geography that is formally owned by strangers than with the showing of deference to unknown persons whose ritual power must be respected. The use of the word territory for ritual space does not help, I think, my appreciation here that some people's territories are more sacrosanct than others. "Ritual space", however, suggests that space owes its power of commanding deference to the ritual power of the persons using it. So it is easy to see that God's space, a church, is more inviolable than a punk's space, the street corner, though both are equally territories.

Ritual space, I am arguing, originates in persons who do not so much stake it out as hallow it in direct proportion to their ritual power, which is very great in the case of actors performing. (As if in accord with this idea Segal (1978) calls the theatre stage space "consecrated".) So the other-worldliness of possession, that creates ritual space, need not be territory, though territory must be an other-worldly piece of the world. In ritual spaces, ordinary conduct may be profane, but, in strange territory, the ritual behaviour as Schefflen describes it - making it look extraordinary - should also be seen as ordinary awe. Two examples of "ordinary awe" follow here. In the first McMurphy solves his problem of having to cross stage space where he should not be and in the second Harding, stuck for a line, gets a prompt that respects the vocal space of the stage. Neither of these examples shows deference to territory as such, but instead deference to a ritual realm that just happens to be territory:

There is not much room in the studio, so McMurphy has a problem when he leaves stage right because he has no way back to stage left that does not traverse stage space. At his exit he walks off stage directly into a wall, then collapses himself into himself, and turns and quickly burrows - with eyes fixed on his destination - to his next entry position.

When Harding cannot remember a line, he freezes his posture and at the same time, without looking at her, calls out to the DSM "Line!" or "Yeah!" The DSM softly cues him and he resumes his speech as if he has not stopped.

The next two examples show how stage space is routinely respected:

The director wanted to show a friend of his the ward book (in which Billy writes his reports of other patients' conversations) that is kept near the nurses' station in the Cuckoo's Nest set. Both B and his friend set off towards the stage from the wings, but at the edge of the area the friend stops. B walks on and picks up the book from its lectern and brings it back to his friend, taking it for granted that his friend would not want to trespass on stage space.

During an afternoon rehearsal in the studio, someone knocks at the door and when he has opened it a few inches puts his head round it and says, "Phone for B." B is across the room where he has been watching Big Nurse rehearse a scene with Warren and Bromden. B now walks all the way round the perimeter of the stage space to get to the door, even though Big Nurse and Warren are not in action at that moment. On his roundabout way to the door, B spots a cigarette end in the stage space and straightaway he picks up Bromden's broom and sweeps the cigarette end into the audience area. Then he very carefully puts the broom back as he found it before continuing on his way to the door.

Earlier I advanced the view that possessed persons who are fully in control create worlds for their audiences to enter. It is compatible with this to suggest that ritual space, which acquires its holy nature from ritually powerful persons, should be deferred to in so far as it seems to be the site of other worlds. Certainly this is the case with battlefields, cemeteries, and, of course, churches and cathedrals. Museums and art galleries are also the sites of other worlds and it may be, then, that they are places of hushed and rapt congregation not because art and archaeology are now lay religions but because, like the churches of religion, they are the places where other worlds begin.

As Hall (1966) showed, people carry about with them units of space into which intrusion that is not at their

bidding is profoundly offensive. My argument shows that this "contour", as Goffman (1972) describes it, is ritual space. Thus people, who, according to their others, overestimate their ritual space, are said to be "distant" or "unapproachable", while "familiar" people underestimate the ritual space of their fellows. Both these descriptions draw on spatial understandings, so too does "being made to feel small" which would be to have one's ritual space compressed, while he who incorrectly thinks of himself as celebrated will be said to be "puffed up with his own importance." Ritual power, already there in a contour around a person, will enter, if it is strong enough, spaces and even objects too, and by a circuitous route it is even conceivable that from ritual spaces persons might draw a ritual power they had not had before, as when a priest for the first time takes up his station before assembled worshippers.

So spilled presence can be treated as having entered non-human ground and thence, sometimes, humans once again.

#### The Audience

Presence, then, may be spilled and absorbed into spaces from which it might be reabsorbed by other performers than those who originally spilled it. But also, in ever greater quantities, presence can be rebounded back to himself by a performer off the audience.

The unity of an audience is itself in the first place brought about by the presence of a common danger - excess ritual power which, during the theatrical event, for

example, looms larger for each and every member of the audience than any of their differences. Cole goes so far as to say that audiences react to "rounding" like a crowd on which someone has pulled a gun, and Andre Breton said that the most perfect surrealist act was to fire a gun at random into a crowd. (Was Breton not expressing here the traditional artistic ambition to win urgent and concentrated attention, and does not this surely rank with the actor's imperative to be the focus of a communion?)

A possibility Cole does not go on to discuss is that audiences too can perform, even rounding on a performer. The mob that hacks down its leader could be said to have rounded on him, and, at least during the sixties, there was scarcely a rock concert that did not see sections of the audience trying to storm the stage. The mob, of course, has reversed the poles of danger and safety, but more commonly, in a real theatrical event, the danger will pass between performers and audience, never settling on either for long. So amidst one watchful agglomeration of consciousness whose supra-awareness is as fraught a medium as there is, great performers walk an electric stalking ground in which their every move and word is naked and in which they have to make a kind of bodily confession before an omnipotent judge, and be acquitted honourably if they want to hear applause.

It seems only commonsense that the more watchful, apprehensive, expectant, keyed-up, and eager the audience

is the more will the performer before it be able to feel confident that his slightest move or intonation will be richly interpreted. In this situation he will be able to so minimise his actions as to make for himself behavioural room for more of the same, which will inevitably further enrich his performance, or, if he keeps his action bare, it will look barer still and so in that way seem a stronger performance than it was. An enriched performance cannot but further excite an already attentive audience, so, it can be said, the audience fuels a performer's ritual power to the degree that he can awaken them to it. I now give some examples of this from the repertory company, and, though they rather assume the point they try to make, I think they give a good idea of this interactional feedback process as it may occur in the theatre:

The matinee audience fills about half the 350 seats and comprises mostly schoolchildren and old-age pensioners. Julia Price advances to the front of the stage during her soliloquy and there is no atmosphere at all. Backstage, after the interval curtain, I meet her drinking tea. "It's awful," she says, "I feel as though there's nobody out there."

B has instructed the cast to use the technical run-through as an opportunity to rehearse. Half the time he is behind a desk rigged up in the middle of the auditorium. When he has an important line, he waits till his cue, then races down the aisle, giving the line maximum volume and expression and arriving on his mark, after vaulting up on to the stage, just as he hits the last word. Every time he does this, the rest of the cast seem to follow his example of throwing themselves further than necessary into their parts. The sundry people milling about, fiddling with lights



and wires and so on, cannot help responding to B's way of playing his part, and the cast react positively to this intriguement that normally is absent from technical run-throughs.

Friday night and a full house for Cuckoo's Nest. From the wings, even, you can feel that the pressure coming from the auditorium is heavier and keener than usual. The chances of an actor being "seen through" are higher than normal tonight, and the actors respond with additional firmness and precision in their playing. The extra effort that is being put out on stage does not seem to tire the actors at all, but to come about as an almost unmediated response to an unusually powerful audience interest.

In everyday interaction, too, it is commonplace that interest can be generated or that interactants can get excited (in Chapter VII, I touched on this briefly when I looked at "the framing of performance"). I am suggesting that this is not only because of a possession coming into focus but also because this is facilitated by ritual feedback. It might be concluded here, then, that ritual power is by no means always locked up in the performer. But it can be locked up in what I next consider: "The Rituals of Ritual Life."

#### Rituals of Ritual Life.

Goffman describes how conversation can be a play of and a play with disparate frames, the references for talk being carved out of worlds not there but for the carving, and he creates images of selves seeming to be regressing backwards from themselves like reflections trapped between parallel mirrors, the speakers not merely functioning as performers and persons but as a quartet of strategists, principals, animators, and figures, severally substitutable.

He articulates a theory of interaction that can accommodate what in 1953 he noted was "the conversational thing about conversation," meaning its "rapid and continued give-and-take" (p119) with constant shifts in subject, tone, purpose, and direction. Unlike any other sociologist, he has brought about a body of words that with an unusually high degree of precision seems in its structuring to reveal hitherto unacknowledged patterns and possibilities of conversation. But though he has used the idea of performance for the show a person can put on, he has not specifically opened his theories to what I take to be the force of performance.

The playworld, or even the world framed by a competent performer in interaction, can be overmastering. Thus, in the intervals of shows that I watched from backstage, I would see actors indulge in just the sorts of choppy interchanges that Goffman analyses, yet all the while they would be pervaded by their playworld as if the characters they would soon be resuming were hovering over them. This of course is the most-impressionistic type of data, but I do think that, for instance, the phenomena of "carry over" is not difficult to grasp of interactions, one to the next, in everyday life. By this I mean the impression among interactants that a world left by one or more of them has not left them. People perhaps do not always snap easily and instantly from frame to frame, from reference to reference, always taking all of their attention with them each time. Something lags, some part of past engrossment is not given

up, part of the mind is trailing. And, when the frame has been brimfull of ritual presence, it might be expected that this will not vanish with a vanishing frame. This is true for performer and audience alike. So I now propose that the shape of interaction chains may come from the ebb and flow of ritual power as much as from the preordained rules of gatherings, which themselves, I suggest, may exist just to generate or preserve ritual power in certain forms.

In the theatre, the arrangements by which audiences are allowed to watch ritual lives are standardized and formalized. Theatrical performances, occasions of ritual, become rituals, because the form of the occasion gathers to itself the deferential respect that is owed primarily to the performers. This can be seen in four of the many rules that I saw followed by audience after audience throughout a whole Spring Season, and which, also, I have rarely seen broken elsewhere. That these rules seem almost too obvious to set down further shows how well-established they are:

- 1 When the lights start to dim, people hush their voices, and by the time the lights are out no one is talking.
- 2 There is no talking or moving about during performances, whatever their quality or power to absorb.
- 3 When the final curtain falls - every time - people applaud, clapping their hands together in front of their chests, with no exceptions.
- 4 Audiences as a body do not rise to leave until they have finished applauding, which is not until the last curtain call has been taken and the lights have started going up.

Most scenes of heightened ritual life seem to undergo this sort of transformation into ritual events in their own right. Trials, funerals, marriages, post-mortems, interviews, lectures, of themselves, like theatres, do come to hold a ritual power borrowed and accreted from the social interactions they are wont to frame.

Rules of rituals appear to be more strongly enforced than rules of interaction, and the more ritualised a ritual is the less the characteristics of its performers come into play. Thus, a mini-ritual like a greeting does not vary greatly whoever the pairs of greeters are, yet, since the greeting is an exchange between persons representing proper personness to each other, a failure to greet is "inexcusable" because persons in general are then disparaged. A maxi-ritual likewise celebrates institutionalised relationships, so that threats to the ritual are threats to the institution in proportion to the formality of the ritual. In this connection, the phrase "empty ritual" can be understood as describing ritual no longer felt to be fully celebrating real states of affairs, and so rituals, I am suggesting, when they are full, are full of ritual presence.

Since ritual life inevitably drifts to the fashionable forms that are rituals of life, it will be appreciated that proper forms of conduct will lag behind experienced ritual presences, and that new kinds of disciplined ritual presence at first will seem formless and opposed to old forms, when perhaps only social analysts - such as Marsh et al (1978), who

found order in football terrace hooliganism - will be disposed to see new forms of ritual life at the very beginning of their becoming outmoded rituals.

### The Dispossessed

I want to say now that, just as the frames of ritual performance become ritualized, so do persons - because they are ritual frames - whether on-form or pathetic, awake or asleep, alive or dead. Status itself may be the frame of a ritual life that may or may not live up to this status-frame which either way will be deferred to as if it truly frames commensurate ritual power. But something happens to professional actors which goes against this generalization. Even though on-stage they can exert enormous ritual power, off-stage their prestige is not nearly so high. Why is this? Why is the professional actor usually regarded as a lightweight person, who the better he is the more will seem to belong in theatres which are not regarded with as much seriousness as are, for example, factories or offices? Is it because the more he is a medium for other selves, the less of a self will he seem to have among those whose selves refer only in a limited way for a limited distance back to their seeming mirror images? Is it because the actor seems too alive, having too much of too many potentials to be any one of them, like a visitor from a kaleidoscope of dreams? Is it his very capacity for possession that dispossesses the actor of any mundane self heavier than that of "actor"?

Before suggesting an answer, I offer three examples of actors being treated as lightweights:

Some members of the company meet with a representative from Equity, the actors' union. Equity have contributed considerable funds to the company but nevertheless, full of after-performance euphoria, none of the actors is concerned to be diplomatic. When everybody has become silent, the representative finds a way of reproaching them for what he takes to be their lack of seriousness. He mentions the fact that he had noticed that one of the non-speaking "loonies" in the Cuckoo show had not been an Equity member. Failing to get any response at all to this, he now unveils the news that Equity has done a deal that works retrospectively so that several of the company will soon be coming into unexpected monies. "Let's have a party!" they all exclaim, and the Equity representative throws me a look which says "Actors!" as if it would be too much to expect them to be serious about anything.

Two city councillors from an area where housing has been condemned to make room for a motorway-spur are meeting the company to discuss the possibility of the company helping a campaign against the motorway. A Saturday afternoon "fair" is being organized to publicise the anti-motorway cause and also to raise cash for a fighting fund. Would the theatre company like to contribute some amusement that, by the way, would also publicise the company's present production? It is all getting bogged down in details when B suggests, "Why don't we simply arrive in our lunatic costumes and loon about among the crowds?" Both the councillors say "No" simultaneously. Picking up on their consternation, B says, "We could carry pickaxes and shovels so that people would think we were on the other side." The councillors laugh in such a way as to indicate that they want B to see that they are tactfully regarding his suggestion as not being made seriously. B smiles broadly at Martini who begins to mime pickaxing a hole in the parquet floor, his eyes widening in horror at whatever it is his imaginary pickaxe is revealing. The elderly councillor clears his throat and starts again.

A delegate from the local Arts Council has called at the office to explain the "position". It takes him half an hour to settle the blame on the company for not filling in an application form when the company first needed subsidies. "But you yourself knew we needed money then. What difference does a form make?"

the delegate is asked. He sighs and scratches his forehead before replying, "If there's no form, the committee can't be expected to know you need money." The response he gets to this is, "Why didn't you fill in a form for us, or tell the committee yourself?" The delegate now smiles as if this is some sort of very clever trick question. "I'm not the applicant," he says. Eyebrows are raised and heads are shaken and one of the girls giggles. The delegate rises to leave, saying, "You do have to fill in a form," as though he cannot believe there exist people naive enough to think otherwise.

I think that actors, dispossessed of the characters they play on stage from the moment that they walk into the wings, are further dispossessed of seriousness off-stage as if to counter their potential for ritual power in interaction. My examples, I think, do show how the officials interacting with the actors I studied seem nervous of powers they have to mock if they cannot take them for what they are. Many times I saw this kind of interaction, and nearly always the actors played themselves unseriously, thus abetting their dispossession, as if, knowing they could easily summon ritual power, they would save it for the theatre.

## CHAPTER IX

### RAPTURE

If we wish the spectator to experience a maximum emotional upsurge, to send him into ecstasy, we must offer him a suitable "formula" which will eventually excite the desirable emotions in him. The simplest method is to present on the screen a human being in a state of ecstasy, that is, a character who is gripped by some emotion, who is "beside himself".\*

Rapture is to possession as deference is to demeanour, not the obverse side from possession of the coin "human interaction" and not the impress of possession's face on the soft substance of appreciation, but rather the sociological state of a subject when he feels himself to be in an object ritual realm that he cannot see as not being his own.

This chapter, then, is about possession from the point of view of the audience, and so does not "advance" my ideas on possession so much as go forth to meet these sideways on, so to speak.

#### Summary

I argue that, given clear enough ritual interpretability, rapture may become the sociological descriptor of one or more persons in an interaction, and, further, that rapturous interactions are not only of importance sociologically but

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\* Eisenstein, Sergei (1968) "Introduction" (to screenplay of) The Battleship Potemkin London Lorrimer Publishing



also, because of their nature, are neglected in sociology. I go on to say that the possibility of rapture in interactions can transform these, so that beyond merely making sense to one another, people can become "interesting" as performed beings, and then enrapturing; and rapture can culminate in catharsis, the experience of having seen things afresh from a privileged point of view. Rapture I here define as a temporary dissolution of the self, but I propose - in an argument which rebuts some of Richard Sennett's recent ideas - that a sign of strong ritual being is the capacity to lose the self so as to create a richer self. Interaction, it follows from this, is fully interactive when persons within it lose themselves over and over again, in every conceivable form. So a person begins to be definable as the very interactional ability to wipe himself from view and change himself totally, at will. Those people who are able to become strange to themselves can even interact, in a fully sociological sense, with themselves, I suggest, and this is socially functional when auto-rapture is its negative, shame. But, usually, interaction is for each interactant an alternation of possession and rapture, especially heightened in a love relationship (for the lovers their most important relationship). The conclusion I finally come to is that life without rapture is hardly sociological, since it would mainly consist in mutual cognitive appraisals which do not logically require the empathetic identification of self with other that allows persons to feel that through and through they are social beings.

## Interpretability

The necessary condition for rapture is that the person who, as it were, becomes the condition of rapture, should so well understand the possession which enraptures him as to be able to share it, when the fact that he, the enraptured person, is one body and the other, the possessed person, is a separate body, is an irrelevance that gives a misleading picture of the rapture-possession relation. Understanding is in its turn impossible if the possession does not have interpretability, and this, in its turn, depends on a common language between the persons locked together, the one enraptured and the other possessed. These summary points need to be amplified.

No matter how great the fidelity of acting on stage to behaviour in life and no matter how skilfully essential elements of the latter are separated from inessential and turned inside out to expose their latent meaning, staged conduct will not be understood by an audience unused to seeing the conduct of everyday life in the same terms. The successful stage illusion, says Burns (1972), depends on a "working consensus" between performers and audience and not on the relationship between staged and unstaged conduct. It is not so much that people only see what they want to see, or that they are only capable of seeing things in certain ways, or even that they can only see what they are used to seeing, but rather that they speak a given language and will not fully understand conduct in a different language.<sup>1</sup> This constraint has never prevented great artists from reaching

the public with no loss of power, but it is an art, and not a science or a technique, to perform precisely for the moment - in a highly intelligible yet concentrated way - something that because it is true of one moment is true of other moments. However, in any culture, not much conduct of any form is of this artistic order, though all conduct must aspire to the condition of art, in which originality of expression is the only way to express what seems original and, therefore, ritually alive.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps, then, the sense of exposure that actors customarily feel before a performance (reported by Little & Cantor, 1970, p 88) comes less from the prospect of being seen by a large number of people than from the certainty of being interpreted by them. After all, every one of millions of commuters each day is seen by thousands of others, and none of these, in streets and stations and so on, will feel nearly so exposed as he would were he on a stage, when an audience would be making up its mind about him as if he were their problem to be solved, either by his competent performance of himself or, if he could not act, by them despite his ineptitude.

Audiences too used to unexposed performances will sink into a sluggish appreciation of what it is to be alive, and they can be roused from this, thinks Grotowski (1976), only by being attacked: "We are talking about profanation. What, in fact, is this but a kind of tactlessness based on the brutal confrontation between our declarations and our daily actions?" Profaning the audience is here seen as a stimulus from the stage intended to spark off the feeling of danger that alone augurs ritual presence.

Grotowski's idea of using "tactless" over-exposure to break up moribund and habitual forms of conduct of course relies on no less well understood forms of ritual conduct. It might even be that the varieties of the ritual code are not so hard to translate one to another as are verbal languages, for instance. The fact that Peter Brook's company in Africa (Heilpern, 1977) succeeded in performing ritually alive plays for audiences who were culturally very remote suggests, indeed, that the closer one approaches a pure ritual code the more universal it is. This does not mean that there really is a human lingua franca but that ritual acts, which need to be original, are equally original to all audiences, though only those audiences who speak the performer's own behavioural language will easily distinguish the genuinely original from what is unoriginal. (This explains why foreigners, at first, are interesting and strange; they seem original.) I now give a very simple example, from my fieldnotes, of interpretable stage conduct, and analyse it to show how intricate is its apparently obvious meaning. This I think shows how much there very often may be even in enactments that demand little decoding effort if the code is known, and this in turn must show how little may be understood of enactments in unfamiliar codes:

There is a piece of stage business in the first act that always gets a good response. McMurphy, against Warren's orders, has just untied the belt that had been restraining Bromden, when Big Nurse comes into the ward, freezing the inmates with her clipped enquiry about what is going on. McMurphy turns wonderingly from Bromden to Big Nurse, whom he has not yet met, and she walks across the stage towards him. His face, but not hers, takes on a pleasant, friendly aspect. "I'll have that, Mr McMurphy, please," says Big Nurse, in a sort of singsong voice as if talking to a naughty child. She holds out her hand for

the belt that McMurphy is holding in his left hand. He makes a long explanatory reply that involves him turning back and forth between Bromden and Big Nurse, and this distracts the audience from the belt and from the fact that Big Nurse is still holding out her hand for it. McMurphy then steers his remarks into the comment that it's "mighty nice" to make Big Nurse's acquaintance, and on that he shakes her by her outstretched hand. Of course, she pulls it away fast, and this always makes the audience chuckle. McMurphy then turns the audience response into laughter as he elaborately hands over the belt, acting as he does so as if he had quite forgotten that that was what Big Nurse had originally asked him for and as if he had also quite innocently misinterpreted her outstretched hand. The audience, every time, at once understand how remiss the mental patient McMurphy has been to shake hands with a nurse and that he has done this in a way that cannot be sanctioned legitimately and how his apologies are completely insincere, and it is essential that they do clearly understand because this and other dramatic enactments of the first act are all that build, for the audience, McMurphy's habitual conduct style or character. But, even though a lot of meaning is being enacted in a very short space of time, there never seems to be any problem of interpretation.

Obviously, interpretability on its own is not enough to guarantee that the interpretable will be interpreted. Some possessions are more popular than others and audiences vary as to what they choose to become enraptured by. This touches on the subject of culture, high and low, and of taste, "good" and "bad", but here I cannot go further into the social processes that set up situations in which one person can say of a possession that has enraptured another person, "I don't know what you see in it." (Raymond Williams, F R Leavis, and Richard Hoggart pursue these problems that also engaged Arnold and Ruskin.)

So rapture will not be brought on by a performance unless the performance has interpretability, and performances faithful to the forms of everyday life may not have this, and imperfectly enacted possessions will not have enough of this, while possessions relying on unknown behavioural codes may distort it, and, for audience reasons entirely, some possessions, however ritually powerful, may be reacted to as if they have no interpretability.

But interpretable possessions are the human totem poles around which the dances of social life go on, as I now indicate.

### The Importance of Rapturous Interactions

Aesthetic contemplation, which is possible for any object and only especially easy for the beautiful, most thoroughly closes the gap between the self and the object. It allows as easy, effortless and harmonious formation of the image of the object as if this image were determined only by the nature of the self. Hence the sense of liberation which accompanies an aesthetic mood; it is characterized by emancipation from the stuffy dull pressures of life, and the expansion of the self with joy and freedom into the objects whose reality would otherwise isolate it.

This is how Simmel (1971) describes a merging of the self with an object that engrosses it, but this process is not so intense or affective as the merging - one self into another self - which yields the "rapture" that I claim is created when ritually powerful possession is effortlessly understood. However, in the same way that a person cannot give himself due deference (for by being someone who would give it to himself he would cease to merit it, and, not being able to merit it, could not then give it either), so a person cannot

enrapture himself with his possession of himself, for his being enraptured would require that he be lost in the possessing self to the exclusion of the control constantly needed to maintain the possession. Thus, persons need other persons if they wish to be "taken out of themselves" into ritual realms that are even more releasing than the objects of aesthetic contemplation. The possession-rapture relation may be then the most social of social relations.

Rapture at possession - getting lost in what Burns (1972) calls a "mythical cohesion" - necessarily collapses social distances, and thus threatens social structures (this, incidentally, provides a structural reason for the framing of performances). A person who regularly collapses social distance by creating rapture is said to be charismatic in Weber's sense of the word, his personal gifts, Weber pronounces, being seen to be supernatural in origin. And because social distance disappears in rapture, the "charismatic structure" (Weber, 1974) "in contrast to any kind of bureaucratic organisation of offices . . . . knows nothing of a form of an ordered procedure of appointment or dismissal." This is inevitable because "charisma knows only inner determination" and "its attitude is revolutionary and transvalues everything." Not only that, but charismatic persons, says Weber, "the master as well as his disciples and followers, must stand outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations, as well as outside the routine obligations of family life." So organizations and movements and even societies may revolve around states of rapture.

Within interaction, the rapture of one person at the possession of another is a mutual over-involvement of the kind that Goffman (1963) has said embarrasses the social occasion in which it occurs.<sup>3</sup> So I suggest here that the neglect within sociology, of the kinds of interaction in which this sort of highly alive mutual symbiosis takes place, may be a result of its not being seen in society, for, knowing its embarrassing potential for social occasions, it hides away or changes its appearance as soon as it feels scrutinized. This is why it is so difficult to study this phenomenon, and why it is necessary to settle in its stead for the stylized variants to be found in theatres. Despite its secretive existence, it is still, however, a sociological phenomenon, because it is between persons, and, since it can be the most important relation persons can have with one another, it must have wide social repercussions.

So rapturous interactions are socially important not only in that they empower, through charismatic persons, charismatic organizations (from a world outside Weber's bureaucratic world it could be argued that bureaucracies too are charismatic, since they work best only when bureaucrats believe in without reserve, or are enraptured by, the magic of pure rationality) but also because for the persons of society, considered one at a time, their most crucial social relations are likely to be just those in which they have the greatest number of their most rapturous interactions. For individuals



and for society as a whole, then, rapture is the key to life, and sometimes there arise political persons who understand this with absolute clarity. Such persons seek to make whole populations fall in love with them, so as to coalesce public and private lives into a millennial dream, and where this love is not forthcoming they perforce must coerce its simulation - I touch on this in the "Summary and Conclusions - with terror, and it has to be terror just because it had needed to be love, the exorbitant responses to love requiring an equally exorbitant coercion if they are not felt. I am thinking of Hitler and the Third Reich. The well-known fact that for a period of his early life Hitler himself was wholly enraptured by Wagner's music gives away the origins of his societal understandings, and, in my "Summary and Conclusions", when discussing the role of the film Taxi Driver in the life of President Reagan's would-be assassin, I shall be coming to a conclusion that the price of a Wagner is a Hitler, a person for whom no other possessions than Wagner's could so enrapture him. (Wagner, of course, knew exactly what he was doing to other people, because he was already doing it to Ludwig II of Bavaria.)<sup>4</sup>

But few people are as spellbinding as Wagner and most of us have all our work cut out just to make sense - a minimum interpretability - in the hope that our sense might be interesting. Rapture may be the key to life but without sense being made between people at all social times no occasions for rapture will arise. How then does sense imperceptibly become interesting, or begin to acquire enough ritual power to carry

other persons away from themselves in the direction of rapture?

The next section of this chapter essays some provisional thoughts on this question.

### Making Sense and Being Interesting

It is a sociological truism that when one person is in the presence of another it will not be possible for either person not to interpret the other's conduct. Persons are always in the predicament of actors, being seen to be conveying a certain self, and, I have said, through that self conveying a larger scenario or ritual realm that the self seems to come from. A heightened consciousness of this, which is socially condemned as "self-consciousness", may bring on a state of behavioural revolt. By looking at such revolts, as I now shall do, one can begin to detect what it means to be "interesting".

The revolt may occur when an actor or an actress starts to feel that other people are too glib in their interpretations and are far too ready to believe in these. Such is the dawn of a Hamlet-style consciousness: "Hamlet is obsessed by the idea of being an actor, that is to say, of falsifying himself through what he does and says. His self-consciousness exceeds his role and blocks his performance of it" (Rosenberg, 1970). This shows that, whatever the self privately thinks (over against what its public thinks it thinks) its social existence is still at the behest of others, who have no option but to take the expressions of its consciousness as the performances they necessarily must be. A further example of a person who

revolts against slick and slickly interpreted outer forms of conduct is the actress Elisabeth Vogler in Ingmar Bergman's (1972) film Persona. She is a great actress who decides she will act no more, on stage or in life, and at first it seems that she is perfectly understood by her doctor, who addresses this speech to her:

I do understand, you know. The hopeless dream of being. Not doing, just being. Aware and watchful every second. And at the same time the abyss between what you are for others and what you are for yourself. The feeling of dizziness and the continual burning need to be unmasked. At last to be seen through, reduced, perhaps extinguished. Every tone of voice a lie, an act of treason. Every gesture false. Every smile a grimace. The role of wife, the role of friend, the roles of mother and mistress, which is worst? Which has tortured you most? Playing the actress with the interesting face? Keeping all the pieces together with an iron hand and getting them to fit? Where did it break? Where did you fail? Was it the role of mother that finally did it? It certainly wasn't your role as Electra. That gave you a rest. She actually got you to hold out for a while more. She was an excuse for the more perfunctory performances you gave in your other roles, your "real-life roles". But when Electra was over, you had nothing left to hide behind, nothing left to keep you going. No excuses. And so you were left with your demand for truth and your disgust. Kill yourself? No - too nasty, not to be done. But you could be immobile. You can keep quiet. Then at least you're not lying. You can cut yourself off, close yourself in. Then you don't have to play a part, put on a face, make false gestures. Or so you think. But reality plays tricks on you. Your hiding place isn't watertight enough. Life starts leaking in everywhere. And you're forced to react. No one asks whether it's genuine or not, whether you're true or false. It's only in the theatre that's an important question.

This speech not only shows how Elisabeth Vogler's autistic mode of conduct can still trigger a massive interpretation from her doctor (that the actress had a demand for truth perhaps even

born of her gift for total deception) but also that there is no eye-tight skin for the human being. Like it or not, reactions will be elicited, and they will be interpreted, and, worse than that (or better, if you are a merchant of morality), provided they make some sense (or a sense), this will be taken as their complete sense. For it is only in the theatre, as the doctor observes, that audiences, behaving there like the working paranoids they must not appear to be in everyday life, search for the possible misrepresentations of conduct, since dramatic staged conduct can only be constructed out of these (if everything on stage at the end of a play is the same as it was at the beginning then there will have been no play).<sup>5</sup> So it might be that in everyday life you are only what you seem to be at a cursory glance, just as Elisabeth Vogler, even when she severely inhibits her conduct by retreating into mutism, is yet seen to be a woman disgusted with pretence, when in fact she may have any number of different reasons as well as this one, or instead of it, for her social withdrawal. (The words "retreat" and "withdrawal" are fascinating evidence that, when a person in Anglo-American culture refuses to give a readable ritual realm, it is assumed that the person has "gone back" into some realm which is secret and guarded. The fact that the person is right there - in close-up too in Bergman's film - in no wise allays suspicions that "really" the person is just about anywhere else but there. Actually the person may just be blank, or following some train of thought that he or she finds senseless. But that psychologists, for example, will construct inner psychodramas from the minute "betrayals" of mad people clearly shows that, even in the face of the most

deliberate acts of realm refusal, there is a cultural determination to create realms out of cues, and this determination is no less strong than the incapacity to accept that realms may not be there, or may be different to the one as it is read.)

So, though people, as I have proposed, might be looking to lose themselves in other people, they only want to do so up to the point that already makes sense to them. Normally then, persons empathise just enough to satisfy themselves that other persons can be made to function in a scenario recognisable to them. But in this case why are Hamlet and Elisabeth Vogler "interesting", and why are there, for that matter, people in everyday life, and characters in playworlds too, who are only looked away from with a sense of loss? The revolt is the clue. Those persons who refuse their others the perfunctory sociability that would "arouse no comment" open up a crack in the psychosocial mosaic. The detaching fragment seems to be turning on its own axis in such a way that its very composition is in question. Therefore it questions the surrounding fragments. Those next to a loosened social piece are immediately loosened themselves, and some of their own self-possession is lost to the social object that seems more lost, but lost only because it wants to find itself, with interest, where it goes looking. Interest here, then, is that part of a person's possession which gives itself into another's, as if to bring this back to itself. And, if it fails to do so, the other remains interesting. So an interesting person is a human kaleidoscope devised to always produce a portrait that while being faithful is obviously not

the whole story and which, if it were the image in the mirror of the viewer, would do him ritual credit. (But there may be many real people who could be interesting yet are not because they do not want to be or because they are speaking the wrong language to the wrong audience.) Sense, then, that just fails to make complete sense, is the snare laid by the stalked interesting person. Catch him and you catch yourself. Lose him and you must go and find yourself in him again.

Perhaps it is even true that every person "can't help" being interesting, but that society only works insofar as it makes people do their best to be as uninteresting as possible, to be, in other words, mere embodiments of current conduct fashions, limiting the originality of their variations on these to the bare minimum necessary to evince others' reaction to them as live or ritual persons. And perhaps people will sacrifice their personness willingly because it is ritually dangerous to be interesting, for interesting people threaten to collapse society's formal status differences which "must be" but "cannot be" exact equivalents of ritual differences. That may be why many interesting people settle for being entertainers: being merely entertaining is a safe way of being dangerous. A dangerous way of being safe, on the other hand, would be to take yourself seriously in everyday life. I now illustrate these last aphorisms with a pair of contrasting fieldnotes. The first, about a punk who plays safe by remaining in character as a punk, shows how this is not necessarily his safest course of action, and the second, about an actor who performs murder on stage, suggests that this person is socially viable perhaps only because he confines

his most theatrical conduct to stages:

N got into trouble last night. After drinking beer all evening, he followed a courting couple through the centre of Bath. When the couple entered a telephone kiosk together and started kissing each other, N responded like a true punk by opening the kiosk door and yelling at the couple: "You dirty fuckers!" Then he slammed the door on them as hard as he could. A small pane of glass at the bottom of the door fell out and broke in two on the pavement and at exactly the same instant a hand clamped itself on N's shoulder. N turned round to confront the policeman who had been following him following the couple. The policeman arrested N, took him to the Police Station, and charged him with some offence or other. N was kept in custody until bailed from the Magistrates' Court the following morning.

Night after night, watching McMurphy grab Big Nurse by the throat and then hammer her head against the wall of the Nurses' Station, I am struck by how murderous B looks when he is doing this. The expression on his face seems then the perfect completion of another expression he often has off-stage, of glazed restraint. Perhaps this kind of tolerated head banging has become indispensable for his general sense of himself. It's not easy to imagine what he would do or be if he wasn't allowed to act, but I don't feel it would necessarily not be frightening for society.

The interesting in social life, then, is that which makes a sense more absorbing than is usual, and whose regard involves a loss of self to the degree that the lost self is absorbed. So interest is a form of rapture - much more frequently encountered than rapture - which, I now add, must stand most chance of being experienced in the rituals of ritual life when these are "full" as in theatres.

Interest shown also revises the interested person, for after being interested he returns to himself changed from the person he was before becoming interested, but rapture that can come to a climax in catharsis can completely change the enraptured person, as I now elaborate.

### Sociable Catharsis and Cathartic Sociability

I have said that persons are apt to be perfunctory in their interpretations of one another, but this, I now submit, may be partly a result of the press and rush of modern social arrangements. No one has enough time for anyone else. The ritual deprivation stemming from this endless social superficiality - which exists even between those lovers who keep glancing at their watches - may build up to a well-nigh insatiable demand for processed, condensed, dramatic life. In Anglo-American culture, it does seem that there must be stages and screens on which lives are distilled and served up with a narrative clarity that makes normal life look as if its medium is mud, and the human images on these stages and screens are there to receive the viewer's identification to such a degree that he will get rid of his limiting self the more so as he is "moved".

It is often wondered why entertainment thrives in hard times, and surprise is expressed that people who should be facing up to adverse realities choose escape. By my reasoning, the escape is a functional reassurance that the escaper is not really as imprisoned by his social circumstance as he had thought. Entertainment lets people be the people



life prevents them from becoming, and they need to be these people very much indeed, for if they cannot become them they stop being people altogether. (Conversely, when life is too pleasant, persons may seek out entertainment that blackens their horizons, going to see Citizen Kane or King Lear. In this way they escape the delusion that, for example, human beings are happy creatures.) So the stage and the screen are where society short-circuits itself. The dullage of everyday life is simply cut out, both as content and consequence. (Of course, what is shown must look like the dullage, but unlike everyday dullage it should be dense with meaning.)<sup>6</sup>

Aristotle (1975) thought that all healthy societies should include the dramatic performances of tragedy. Within tragedy there should be, he says, "incidents arousing pity and fear," the pity at seeing a person receiving "undeserved misfortune" and the fear from his being "a man like ourselves." The social purpose of drama, Aristotle thought, is to draw its audience into it by empathetic identification so that the emotions they will feel by imitation<sup>7</sup> will "purge" them "cathartically". It is as though, for Aristotle, the dramatic short-circuit is an electro-convulsive therapy for audiences, jolting them into seeing sense where, before, their social life had been slowly turning into a long sad vista of entropic repetitions.

In my rhetoric catharsis is simply the outcome of rapture at possession, and maybe it is most necessary for those most "out of" life, as Freud found, for he took this concept to the

centre of his therapeutic practice.<sup>8</sup>

It even seems that possessions in general may often be the outcome of cathartic rapture, and it is possible that rapture in this way has an important function for possession, not just between people but as a routine imaginative requirement. Thus the renowned bio-chemist Jacques Monod (1974) thinks his understanding of a protein molecule is arrived at in this fashion:

I have . . . found myself, after lengthy concentration on the imagined experience to the exclusion of everything else, identifying with a molecule of protein. However, it is not at that moment that the significance of the simulated experiences becomes clear, but only when it has been enunciated symbolically. Indeed, the nonvisual images with which simulation works should be regarded not as symbols, but, if I may so phrase it, as the subjective and abstract "reality" offered directly to imaginary experience.

Here Monod says that his merging with a form, not even human, enables his later representation of it through a symbolic performance, which - if this makes him understand the molecule anew - is then cathartic. The same process is described by the French literary critic Maurice Nadeau (1972), attributing it to Flaubert (the quoted phrases in the following are taken by Nadeau from Flaubert's correspondence):

For Flaubert, to write was to allow himself to be invested by "the objective" until he merged into it, and then, by "atrocious labour" and "fanatical and devoted perseverance" to "operate" on the compound formed by the interiorized "thing" or the exteriorized self and make it yield up the word which gives it its existence. In this way, "style is the

very life-blood of thought" though the  
"marvellous chemistry" by which words explode  
into another world, another nature, "remains  
completely incomprehensible."

Flaubert merges with the world he perceives and "explodes"  
out of it (catharsis) as words that are "another world" or  
"another nature", or, in my terms, a ritual realm. (This  
ritual realm of course is not Schutz's paramount reality,  
but is paramount to those lost in it, who, for example,  
reading a book, may reach a point of not being able to see  
that it is mere words. The words conceal their verbality  
then as successfully as successful ritual people conceal  
their biological humanness.) Nadeau goes on to say that  
for Flaubert "as for Mallarmé, language 'nothings'  
(neantise) the thing it designates, and must be 'nothinged'  
in its turn for the thing to emerge in its primal freshness  
together with the unique expression which reveals it." So  
one might say that to speak at all is to catharsize oneself,  
coming to be the exact possession of what had been enrapturing.  
Not all catharses are like Madame Bovary, and against that  
many individuals, with no forms or words for anything,  
perhaps eschewing these in favour of "authenticity", are the  
positively or negatively enraptured abeyances of themselves,  
never, as it is said, "coming into their own," as little  
definable as babies who in place of sentences and paragraphs  
can only cry "Wow" or "Too much".<sup>9</sup>

Ritual realms, it must not be forgotten, are not really  
there, and only arise in words and performances, but words  
and performances are really there for people, where reality is  
not, because they are ritual realms generated by articulated

incorporations of otherness into self. This is not a question of one frame being preferred over another (Goffman, 1975), but of a frame itself preferring more than others to be preferred. So Flaubert, the artist-masturbator, an alchemist of meaning, distils an aphrodisiac that is itself for itself, or as Flaubert put it, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi." People do this sort of thing, I have suggested, because they want to be people, i.e. always more interestingly defined. They are scientists through and through: they want to be the knowable unknown of themselves and more than that to be carried away by themselves so as to know more of more unknowability, and so on.

So I conclude here that phenomena make sense sometimes to the point of becoming interesting, and that the interest they command can turn into rapture which can dissolve an enraptured self prior to its new resolution, and that this may be a general feature of creative intellection.

The point has been reached now where rapture, because of its far-reaching effect of identity destruction, does not look innocuous any more, as does some such condition as "taking the role of the other." An enraptured person, far from taking the role of the other, a phrase which implies and which I think is meant to imply that there is not only a degree of choice in the "taking" but only a small amount of the self engaged in doing this taking, actually becomes wholly the other, submitting to the other in an absolute manner. So the possessed other of an enraptured person is his master.

Is the self-destruction of rapture better avoided? I now try to answer "No" to this question, largely by arguing against Sennett (1977), who would answer "Yes". But first I

shall go into the interaction phenomenon of "atmosphere", to emphasise a point to be made more strongly later that human interaction in an "atmospheric" or quasi-rapturous (positive or negative) state is so because it is on the verge of possessions it fears and desires. This will support my view that rapture - as Sennett fears it is not - is inherently unstable and ever likely to give way to possession.

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An "atmosphere" may be defined as the behavioural state for interactants in which the dominant orientations are to unacted performances that are nonetheless indicated by the present conduct. A cheerful atmosphere is one in which participants might seem to be restraining themselves from breaking into song and dance, while an unpleasant atmosphere is one in which open expressions of dislike and acts of hostility are "just below the surface". "Air" can be "cleared" of threatening antipathies by addressing them directly; serious differences that still cannot be settled then may be settled interactionally with the formula of "agreeing to differ," which will be a mutual tolerance of irreconcilable opinions in which expressed "undercurrents" of dislike are outlawed by common consent.

Sometimes, however, atmospheres can be so thick that "you could cut them with a knife". (In atmospheres like these an interactant may not even dare to open his mouth lest "one wrong word" result in his having "his head bitten off".) Most marriages produce thick atmospheric conditions

at times, in which one or other or both of the partners may be reduced to complaining, "Everything I do seems to be wrong." This "getting on each other's nerves" can be cleared not only by verbal agreements but also by the interactional quantum leap to a "row", during which performances can include physical assault, shouting, screaming, violent language, weeping, and the smashing of treasured objects. Rows that do not end in injuries or in one or other partner "walking out", and often those that do, eventually lead to reconciliations, when the whole process is set in motion again. What is happening here, I suggest, is that persons who are too familiar with each other's possessions suffer thwarted rapture which builds up an atmosphere only cleared if the possessions are changed, as in rows, when two furious persons wholly engross each other in the mode I have called enrapturing, though negatively, with each side shaming the other, until catharsis of some sort ensues ("making it up in bed," etc when the rowing couple, two demons, are sent packing like actors after their too-exhausting show is over.) But of course atmospheres exist in most interactions and it may even be possible to say that if an interaction has no atmosphere then it is not an interaction. And it seems as if it is of the nature of atmospheres, the thicker they get, to precipitate from increasingly unstable negative and positive raptures quite new possessions.

## Rapture and Self-Destruction

In his important work, The Fall of Public Man, Richard Sennett (1977) continually worries about the social situation in which "one person must become master of, and distant from, the feeling to which another will submit." But I think that, correct though he is to isolate the activity of submission, he misplaces his reservations in the actual process of interaction rather than in the purposes and abilities of possessing persons. After all, it is exhilarating and enlarging to submit to Johan Sebastian Bach when it is not nearly so improving to go along with Barbra Streisand and is perverting to sink oneself into the person of a Charles Manson. Christopher Ricks (1974) in his book about John Keats, Keats and Embarrassment, makes my point when he shows that Keats' ability to empathize, rated by Ricks as outstanding, derived from the very instability of his own identity, whose instability, Ricks argues, is the necessary condition for empathy. There is no contradiction here. Strong identity is not fixed identity, but is one that is extraordinarily sensitive and accommodative to its human surround, and the more sensitive it is through its instability the more it will know the difference between Bach and Radio One. Rapture is not, however, involuntary (as Sennett assumes it always must be) but, when it is volunteered, of course it is submission (as Sennett regrets very deeply), of a nature, I must say, that simply cannot be maintained (whatever Sennett fears) when what it would submit to shows itself as ugly according to an aesthetic scale developed through earlier submissions. The idea being advanced here, that to be fixed and unyielding is to

be weak of identity, is actually quite an old one, even though it still runs contrary to many modern behavioural myths.

Strindberg (1964) in 1888 put it as follows:

The word "character" has, over the years, frequently changed its meaning. Originally it meant the dominant feature in a person's psyche, and was synonymous with temperament. Then it became the middle-class euphemism for automaton; so that an individual who had stopped developing, or who had moulded himself to a fixed role in life - in other words, stopped growing - came to be called a "character" - whereas the man who goes on developing, the skilful navigator of life's river, who does not sail with a fixed sheet but rides before the wind to luff again, was stigmatised as "characterless" (in, of course, a derogatory sense) because he was so difficult to catch, classify and keep tabs on.

I do not think, however, that Sennett need be accused of having a middle-class prejudice against protean man, but it does seem that the cynicism with which performers sometimes view their performances makes him very suspicious of rapture. Thus, as if to seal his argument, he quotes Liszt on Paganini: "He who created so much enthusiasm could make no friends among his fellow men. . . . Paganini's god was never any other than his own gloomy, sad 'I'." But this situation only comes about for Paganini because he would not or could not find any possession beyond his own in which to enrapture himself, and the fault for this surely lies elsewhere than in his own musical virtuosity in front of audiences.

It seems to me, then, that what most troubles Sennett is that possession - which I am saying the performer can hardly ever experience as his audience does - carries audiences away



to nowhere but where they came from and this very often through a possession the performer turns on like a mechanical projector. But Sennett seems to have quite forgotten his earlier book, The Uses of Disorder (1970), in which he makes this excellent observation:

The fact that a man can care about something outside himself is a sign that he has a distinctive self of his own.

Men who cannot become enraptured at least to this degree of "caring" are, Sennett says in The Uses of Disorder, "indifferent to the effects of their acts, especially in moments of strain, because they have not developed a sense of themselves that would give them the strength to have a sense of others." And Sennett's ideas are the same as mine when, in the earlier book, he says that caring is a prerequisite for being somebody - because caring, a form of empathy, is mild rapture - but when he proposes, in The Fall of Public Man, that you cannot have a self if you allow it to feel rapture I think he assumes that rapture must preclude possession. Sennett's horror of an encounter group society, in which human forms would degenerate into a psychosocial ooze, is one I share, but this kind of society is surely not prevented by a taboo on rapture, and may not be prevented, either, by a taboo on becoming enraptured by poor people (F R Leavis would strongly disagree) because any state of rapture is the beginning of a voyage out of the self and, in any case, cannot survive either its disillusion with any given possession or the disintegration of that possession.

My argument is that Sennett's two extremes - on the one hand the personalisation of self by unique conduct and on the other hand the elaborate control of the ungiving self - are

not polar opposites. The opposite of originality is not controlled unoriginality, for originality, I have shown, depends on control much more than does unoriginality. (I have in fact claimed that originality has no polar opposite, only its rapturous appreciation, the state Sennett equates with passive unoriginality.) Presence of rapture, I therefore contend, in no wise irretrievably dissolves the self and may even be a condition for the self's growth (though absence of rapture need not prevent wholly original possessions).

Now follow two fieldnote passages about occasions that illustrate this idea. In the first a punk becomes more of a punk by having been enraptured by a punk performer, and in the second nurses work in a more nurse-like fashion after helplessly watching others being more nurse-like than themselves.

Jimmy Pursey, of the only currently viable punk group, Sham 69, has been on stage an hour at the Bath Pavilion. He finishes a song, and then, in the silence, points at the handcuffs he has clipped into the belt loops of his jeans. Out of breath from singing and dancing around, he now almost gasps into the microphone (setting off some painful feedback): "The next one's for anyone who's ever worn a pair of these." This excites the punks like nothing else, and as the guitars practically knock down the back wall with their opening chords the punks pogo faster than ever. They're completely out of time with the beat, punching fists into the air and leaping up and down out of phase with one another. Over their bobbing heads in the spotlight beam the air clouds with the steam of their sweat, and Jimmy Pursey, on stage alone in the beam, writhes like a skewered dervish. Then he freezes and the noise stops dead and he yells into the microphone: "I never had fuck all!" And before one has time to respond to this in one's mind the music hits one again like a hammer blow between the eyes. The punks are beside themselves, all of them thoroughly enraptured, and in their midst I spot one of the

Bath punks who for the first time in twelve months looks as if he's enjoying himself. After the concert, on my way to a restaurant, I see him standing alone, very posed, right on the edge of a kerb next to fast traffic in a one-way street. The passing headlights splash him with violent light and shadow so that his face is like a flickering, heatless flame, hardly a part of his general appearance which is that of a teenage tramp who has been dragged backwards through barbed-wire dripping with day-glo dyes. I am convinced that he is absolutely conscious of his stance, and that he relishes the image he makes. His being as he is at this moment can only be as a result of his earlier total identification with Jimmy Pursey on stage.

Bedmaking is done in pairs clockwise round the ward. With some nurses, it's very easy to match my movements with pillow, sheet, blanket, and bedspread to theirs, and with others almost impossible. And yet all do it in exactly the same prescribed fashion. The nurses are well aware that this is how it always is. Today, a nurse new on the ward partners up with the very tidy nurse, the one who opts for working with equipment rather than with people whenever she can. The two seem to be competing, not only to see how fast each can go but to see how neatly they can work. When they get onto their third bed, they don't see that Sister (who is very bad at beds herself, and knows it) is now stood watching them, quite fascinated. The rest of us also stop doing what we are doing and watch, because it is impossible to take one's eyes off this brilliantly synchronised "first-time" performance. The two nurses finish their bed and then, of course, notice they have been the centre of attention. Sister smiles at them and walks off back to her office, while the two nurses look at each other and at the rest of us and laugh as does everybody now. Then, when we resume our bedmaking, we try a little harder and work a little faster, and only because we have seen how well what we are doing can be done.

## Being a Person Means Losing Oneself

In exploring what by my theoretical light seem to be one or two inadequacies on Sennett's part, I have cleared the way for my making of the point (already made from possession's point of view at the end of Chapter VII) that pure possessions exhaust "being" not only of those who would become enraptured by them but also of those who are so possessed, and this point I make to suggest that auto-rapture, which I shall deal with shortly, is an implicit, but only implicit, condition of the possessed person. His state of being nothing but his legible surface needs, as I have said, his full control, which would be gone if he went over to rapture at a possession that in this case just happens to be his own. But, implicitly, all of himself, of whom his possession is its clearest definition, is taken into his own possession just as it would be if he were enraptured by it, but with this difference, that it is taken into a form that it already knows, in which, usually, it cannot get lost unless it would wittingly or unwittingly confuse the possession. (Thus, if you do it yourself, you do it, and if someone else does it in front of you he does it and you do not have to do it yourself, and if you are the one doing it your "implicit" rapture is the loss of your being with no compensating bonus of discovery.) Sartre (1963) says much the same of Genet's and Wilde's absolute declaration for the surfaces of life:

If Genet feels in his heart that Beauty concerns him, the reason is that, like evil, it demands of him the most difficult conduct. It requires that he live according to its law, the law that Wilde,

prince of aesthetes, calls style and Genet elegance. "In matters of great importance," says the former, "the vital element is not sincerity, but style." And the latter: "The only criterion of an act is its elegance." Elegance: the quality of conduct which transforms the greatest quantity of being into appearing. An act is the less elegant as it leaves a larger quantity of waste, of unassimilable residues, as it involves a greater degree of utilitarian conduct. Gratuitous and destructive, the act is all the more elegant as it transforms reality into appearance for a larger number of spectators.

Elegance, style, and possession, the more intense they are, are all the more concerned with audience, and are the truest manifestations of social man: that is the message of this thesis. Yet both Wilde and Genet, extreme stylists, the one with his cult of beauty, in which the contemplation of beauty was the only other excuse for life besides that of being beautiful oneself, and the other with his devotion to criminals (practised both by his passive homosexuality and his adoration of prose), found that their creation of aesthetic words of performance was invariably the outcome of respective losses of self in rapturous abandonment. So the implicit rapture of clear possession may be a function of a person's capacity for direct rapture in an external possession, the greater this latter capacity the more his potential for effective self possession. This I think supports my argument that rapture and possession are very often found side by side, to the same degree, in the same person, as well as reciprocally between persons. Thus it would follow that, when persons interact, their biographies, for example, may have very little importance if the interaction is ritually alive, and if it is alive like this it may come about that any interactant may feel he is any other interactant. Interactants will then

feel strange or familiar as they are possessed or enraptured, and sometimes, when a possession is perfect and the strange is as familiar as the familiar is strange, interaction - at its most interactive - will be a juggling of endlessly metamorphosing identities that hardly belong to the bodies without which (in not every case) they could not be there.

In everyday life one does not meet many moral aesthetes on the order of Wilde or Genet, but one is unlikely to meet another person who does not act, who does not conjure a realm, and who does not do this except to try to bring about in his audience a belief, which he would like to be a rapturous one, that by his performance he comes into his own as a person, just like them. A person then is someone who if you look at him is not there, because if he is there you cannot look at him, since then you must be him, who is not watched by your eyes but entered by these, and this "him" is constituted not by any confessional act of definition but by the quality of his playing with any material that comes to his hand, only being his and his only because of, if he has it, his unique style or "behavioural signature", as Goffman (1975, p 547) has said:

...when an individual appears in person before his familiars and joins with them in talk - surely the place where we ought to see him in the round, acting for himself, in his own name and in his own way - he frames himself from view. To say that he assumes a role and presents himself through it is already a bias in the direction of wholeness and authenticity. What he does is to present a one-man show. He animates. That much is his own, his doing of the moment. But this capacity to present is largely used in the name of principals other than he-himself-at-the-moment. Certainly, beliefs, concerns, feelings, attitudes, are "expressed"; "inner states" are documented. But these displays are not some privileged access to the biological innards of the speaker, for they are properly to be attributed to a

figure animated, not the animator.

So a person is not someone who merely is a person before one's very eyes - such a person is only a creature, as he must be to those students of interaction who cannot or will not become enraptured (consider the above quotation and try to visualise the individual described, and immediately you realise that your refusal to be taken in by his performance makes him little more than a figure of fun). A person is someone who agitates his audience's imaginations, a being who is the pretext for a world of meanings, a sort of behavioural commotion that both he and his others with their gestures and their words seem to be groping through as if there is a way out of it into a world of clear, hard truth not a long way away but, if only one can find the right word at the right time, liable to open itself up at any instant. And occasionally a person does and says things in such a way that those around him fall in love with him, by which I mean they lose their sense of separation, becoming nothing but possessed consciousnesses wishing to further excite the being they are watching, but are no longer conscious of watching, into a form so true that it will be irrefutable. A society without citizens who can relate in these ways, it must be said, is not much more than a crowd of strangers, a sort of limbo to a hell of inviolable solitudes, and is not a social place that will claim any loyalty from its denizens, nor have much use for sociology if sociology is the study of social life considered as being social. This asocial limbo, of course, exists for the major part of their time for the majority of people, in every city of the world.

To close this section I invite the reader to ponder the following long excerpt from my theatre fieldnotes, which hints at what rapturous interaction might be. Then I follow that with an excerpt from a transcript of a university seminar which shows a singular lack of rapture between the two conversants who are in fact colleagues:

We shove our way into the club - it's like boarding a Northern Line tube in the rush hour at Leicester Square - and start struggling towards the bar. Already slightly drunk, after the post-performance drinks in the Griffin, no one notices their feet being trodden on or that they are treading on other people's feet and also on coats that have been brushed off the backs of chairs. I fancy that I am first to the bar but there ahead of me to my left is B, his eyes very bright, presumably because the pupils are dilated after his sniffing cocaine earlier on in the men's dressing room. He would also appear to have lost the capacity to blink. I wonder who he's going to be when he orders his pint of Guinness, the Lancashire lad made good, the gypsy, the forthright artisan, the gifted director, McMurphy, the womaniser, the failure and alcoholic, the paranoid, the rustic thespian, or what. He tilts his head back very slightly and at the same time turns his head very slightly from side to side taking in not only me but the entire press of his fellow actors shoving towards the bar, each of them thrusting paper money at Tom and his assistant as they dash back and forth behind the counter, drawing the outstretched hands after them like tentacles. Tom seems more hunched than usual, peering out from under his forehead as though expecting a hail of glasses and bottles, and then he sees B and notices the familiar look of calm belligerence, and comes to him straightaway. I've been so intent on watching B ride this rip-tide of outsize personalities that I have stopped hearing the noise. Then I come to and hear an undifferentiated roar, through which the juke-box - it's the Stranglers singing, "Whatever happened to Leon Trotsky?" - even at full volume can barely be heard. There's a sudden lull in the sound and it coincides with a brief pause in the music. B supplies the Stranglers' next line slightly ahead of them and in an undertone: "He got an ice-pick." B buys me a pint along with his Guinness which means that he's decided



to be Orson Welles, and I feel he wants me to say something arresting so as to justify to him his decision to make me privy to his life style. Without really thinking, I lean across and shout in his hear: "Alcohol, the great ventriloquist." He smiles broadly. Then a voice in my ear - it belongs to Martini, but I can't turn round to check because of the crush - says, with surprising clarity above the roar: "Glove puppets!" There's a lot of laughter and spilled beer now, and the next thing I remember I am in a group sat round a circular table so full of glasses that there isn't space for a matchbox let alone a micro tape-recorder. Hands keep swooping into the collection of full and empty and half-empty glasses and sometimes - it's almost surprising - they snatch up not glasses but lit cigarettes from the ashtray in the middle of them all. I'm very aware of people's teeth and the red fingernails of women and the eyes glancing this way and that and voices almost polyphonic as if detached from faces and including my own as if detached from me. I keep looking at my watch - every time I do so I think I am looking at it too much - and each time it shows another thirty minutes as if some child under the table has moved on the minute hand for devilment. In the toilets I try to reconstruct who I am sitting with and what the conversation has been about, but B comes in and, as if I have prompted the remark, says conclusively: "No more heroes." After a pause, he adds: "The excellence of mediocrity." I just cannot remember what I said, but I do remember him chuckling with appreciation. The next day (now, as I am writing) I feel - through a headache like pounding smog - that I have been in a sort of giant concrete mixer and haven't yet reformed into a slightly different shape to the one I had before I chucked myself into the mixer. My only thought at this point - the point of giving up the reconstruction of persons and their statements, which I never carried on from where I began it in the toilets last night - is that people are afraid of self-propelled interaction not because the reasons for it may be wrong but because it can become the reason for everything else which, when it is lacking, leaves one in social worlds that simply do not feel sufficiently social. Thus pubs, pub life, and the "problem" of alcoholism.

X: So if you look at that work and I don't want to get into that stuff in detail because it's - it's all very complicated and - and um well worked out I mean it's well worth while just going back to the thing. They've got - let me see - they've got - they identify eight threats to internal validity and another four to external validity, and they work out all sorts of elegant designs (pause in which speaker smiles pityingly and patronisingly) of - um - experimental treatments to meet these different threats. Um...

Y: Interesting...

(The door to this seminar room has swung into an open position of its own accord.)

X: What? (Looks to door.) A non-person coming in.

Y: Non-person coming in.

X: An invalid person.

(No laughter. Four seconds of silence.)

X: So, and then there's all sorts of other - sort of - discussions about validity, there's all sorts of different definitions about validity - um - in the literature, about - um - face validity - about whether it looks right on the surface - at least to a reasonably discriminative observer does it look right. And there's notions of convergent validity, which are the notions of using a set of different measures to sort of triangulate in on what we're trying to measure...

Y: Sorry X - Can I? - I'm in a muddle - I don't know when - how soon you want the discussion to start, because I don't want to stop your - your development of the argument but there are already one or two queries I've got.

X: Aha.

Y: And they're terminological. Are you talking of validity of measures or the validity of evidence or the validity of conclusions? Because some of the things you've been saying are traditionally in the business of the validity of measures, like valid - like validity and reliability of measures - do they measure what they purport to measure. Um. But some of the arguments might also be about the validity of conclusions which you come to

on the basis of examining the evidence -

X: Uhum.

Y: Is your evidence a valid sample or is the conclusion you've drawn validly drawn. Which is it you're talking about?

X: Yeah. That's a confusion in my mind as well.

Man, therefore, does not live by himself alone. But some manage quite well, sometimes seemingly indifferent to the rest of the species, in a state, auto-rapture, whose definition is overdue.

### Auto-Rapture

I started out by saying that a person cannot enrapture himself. This is not strictly true, but cases of auto-rapture, as one might call it, do depend on the strangeness of the self to the "same" self that regards it. Louis Bouilhet reported that his friend Gustave Flaubert could not help crying when he re-read Madame Bovary. Here an author is worked on by his own performance. Similarly a man might build his own physique into something wondrous to his eyes, as one of the heroes of Mishima's Kyoko's House (in Nathan, 1975) does:

What he now beheld was something he had created himself; moreover it was himself.

Mike Katz (Gaines & Butler, 1980) has similar experiences:

Sometimes when you're working out in the gym, and you're so much more developed and, you know, unbelievable in comparison to anybody

working out around you, you say to yourself,  
"Man, am I real? Is it possible that I  
really am this big?"

Freud (1978) says that women "especially if they grow up with good looks" love themselves as deeply as they are loved by men. Of these and other auto-rapturous beings he writes:

Such women have the greatest fascination for men, not only for aesthetic reasons, since as a rule they are the most beautiful, but also because of a combination of interesting psychological factors. For it seems very evident that another person's narcissism has a great attraction for those who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are in search of object love. The charm of a child lies to a great extent in his narcissism, his self-contentment and inaccessibility, just as does the charm of certain animals which seem not to concern themselves about us, such as cats and the large beasts of prey. Indeed, even great criminals and humorists as they are represented in literature, compel our interest by the narcissistic consistency with which they manage to keep away from their ego anything that would diminish it.

What Freud is saying here, of course, virtually rejects its own concept of narcissism, for there is no need to say any more than that the self enraptured in itself is only enraptured by what would enrapture any self, and that this is the simple reason why other selves come to be enraptured by auto-enraptured people. (And being enraptured in or possessed by one's own possession of the moment must strengthen it so long as the auto-rapture does not reduce the possession's consciousness.)

But, as if going along with Freud's idea that narcissism or auto-rapture is of itself attractive, many people assume that auto-rapturous persons would be relatively closed to possessions other than their own. I now advance the opposite view that a person is more likely to be able to achieve the state of auto-

rapture if he can become relatively easily enraptured by other possessions first.

To appreciate this, it must be born in mind that rapture is not a state produced as it were involuntarily. A great performance might be resisted - Pontius Pilate was only "almost" persuaded - and a bad one might be used for absorptive purposes, as when people allow themselves to drift into the tune of an indifferent song. So persons can deliberately cultivate their interest and rapture in artefacts or performances they would be inclined to ignore. Thus Genet, as Sartre (1963) discloses:

He [Genet] uses gestures as instruments of prospecting. He has informed us of his method: "I take gestures chosen from young men passing by. At times it's a French soldier, an American, a hoodlum, a bartender. . . . They suddenly offer me a gesture which can only be Erik's. I shall take note of it. . . . I sometimes try to imitate the discovered gesture. I note the state that it makes me know." No doubt he is only momentarily a beggar, a fallen queen, a ship's ensign. But there are only momentary souls. The one that remains longest or that recurs most often we call our soul, and we are surprised to find it again after a long journey. Proust, too, experienced the surprise that Genet cultivates and that Darling tries to ignore, and he often wondered how, "after deep slumber. . . . seeking one's mind, one's personality, as one seeks a lost object, one ends by finding one's own self rather than any other."

In this way an oft-enraptured person can almost become a stranger to himself, or, to put it in the language of this thesis, can reawaken himself to the contingent nature of his own possession which then - just because it has been made strange - much more than the closed "narcissistic" self opens itself up for the rapture that is auto-rapture. He who would readily inhabit possessions, of others and of himself, then, will develop a finer consciousness of these than his opposite extreme, the man who "does not waste his time" on other people. In everyday

life, one might go on to say, the "showing of an interest" that is the mark of an auto-rapturous person will inevitably facilitate more interesting displays, for resolute shows of "not being interested" will likely blight all but the hardiest ritual growths, because of the feedback process (noted in Chapter VIII) of ritual awareness fuelling ritual power.

However, auto-rapture may not be merely and only the personal pay-off for being interested in others or for being, as Freud thought, interesting of oneself. A social function is performed by its negative, "shame". The ashamed person, or the person who fears to feel ashamed of himself, is brought into social line by no other internal process than that, when he contemplates, as if from outside it, his engrossing self, he, the contemplator, is suddenly "mortified" by what engrosses him. His rapture then does not cathartically precipitate a better self, but, abruptly negativized, spits out a grim consciousness bent on nothing more splendiferous than "living down" its socially unacceptable predecessor.

One would expect, therefore, that in interaction auto-rapture will probably alternate with possession, the fully auto-enraptured person not being social enough and the possessed person always to some degree - despite that I have said he is familiar with himself from the inside - identifying rapturously with his possession (as much as he is unfamiliar with it by his coming to it from other enrapturing possessions), and, in the same way, two persons, interacting, might be in a state, each of them, of alternating possession (of himself) and rapture (in the other) that is quite wrongly represented here as discontinuous events. Although I

shall stick to my analytic schema, I am indicating that this is all it is, and that, useful as it may be, it may not very accurately chart the actual reciprocations, one with another, of possession and rapture in interaction, about which, however, practically nothing is not open to revision. I now fill out these thoughts a little more.

### Direct and Alternating Interaction

I have already said why I think Richard Sennett (1977) is unnecessarily alarmed by the capacities for rapture that persons show, and I have indicated that it might be a mistake to see rapture as exclusive of possession, as does Sennett when he says the intimacy of private life can only beget "refugee" personalities and "soft selves". Against the soft selves "in a hard world" (p 260) Sennett advocates the development of masks, recommending a new animation of these false faces, which would require the practice of an all-but lost art of public performance between persons. Though I thoroughly agree with Sennett that rapture confronted with rapture involves a deterioration of human definition inimical to the production of rapture in the first place, I cannot go along with him in assuming that possession must only meet equal and opposite possession - though in "rounding" this in effect is what it does, but, I am saying, adamantly, with intervening rapture on both sides. I say this because it does not seem to me that it must follow that an enraptured person is not, straightaway after being enraptured, capable of assuming a commanding possession, any more than it must follow that a possessed person is not, straightaway after

achieving a very high definition of self, capable of sinking completely into someone else's equally defined performance. Thus I am led to say that this process of possession becoming rapture in each and every person of an interacting group may be normal for all proper interactions, the oscillations perhaps being very rapid. Certainly it would seem that in the case of lovers there is likely to be incredibly quick oscillation, for both interactants, between losing the self in the other and feeling the other to be lost in the self, with additional contrapuntal oscillations between losing oneself in one's lost self in the other and finding oneself in the other's lost self in oneself.

A good question to ask now is, "How does a person recover himself from rapture?" I think that he does not so much tear himself out of someone else's possession as find that it is no longer enough to hold him, and he knows he is not being held by noting that he has "come to". Coming-to and "staying to" may lead to boredom with an interaction. Boredom, then, may be the absence of rapture through the persistent presence of an unenrapturing self. Solitary confinement perhaps would not be the punishment it is were this not the case.

Perhaps, also, the alternating current of self and not-self is what charges lovemaking with its feeling of being more creative than any other kind of social interaction, the biological creation sometimes consequent upon the activity being seized on as a convenient rhetoric of description by those, the majority, who so far lack sociological imagination as to mistake copulation for a celebration of biological relations when, as often as it may be that, it is also the process of biologies being used to



effect very special social bondings, which the Christian marriage service, for example, recognises in the phrase, "With my body I thee worship." (The biological reduction translates that into, "With myself I worship thy body.") Mutual engrossment of any sort might then require that both parties are able to be fascinating for each other at the exact same time that they can also lose themselves in each other without thereby relinquishing their separate fascinations. Thus social interaction that is fully interactive enough to feel for the interactants like interaction might depend on these sorts of rapid oscillations of the self, it only being the case in stage performances that the division of labour is not made within each interactant but actually between interactants. The following passage from James Joyce's (1948) A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man I think does show that an enraptured person may not be lost to his surroundings even when only one aspect of these enraptures him:

His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down the dark slimy streets peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound. He moaned to himself like some baffled prowling beast. He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin. He felt some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from the darkness, a presence subtle and murmurous as a flood filling him wholly with itself. Its murmur besieged his ears like the murmur of some multitude in sleep; its subtle streams penetrated his being. His hands clenched convulsively and his teeth set together as he suffered the agony of its penetration. He stretched out his arms in the street to hold fast the frail swooning form that eluded him and incited him: and the cry that he had strangled so long in his throat issued from his lips. It broke from him like a wail of despair from a hell of sufferers and died in a wail of furious entreaty, a cry for an iniquitous abandonment, a cry which was but the echo of an obscene scrawl which he had read on the oozing wall of a urinal.

He had wandered into a maze of narrow and dirty streets. From the foul laneways he heard bursts of hoarse riot and wrangling and the drawling of drunken singers. He walked onward, undismayed, wondering whether he had strayed into the quarter of the jews. Women and girls dressed in long vivid gowns traversed the street from house to house. They were leisurely and perfumed. A trembling seized him and his eyes grew dim. The yellow gas flames arose before his troubled vision against the vapoury sky, burning as if before an altar. Before the doors and in the lighted halls groups were gathered arrayed as for some rite. He was in another world: he had awakened from a slumber of centuries.

He stood still in the middle of the roadway, his heart clamouring against his bosom in a tumult. A young woman dressed in a long pink gown laid her hand on his arm to detain him and gazed into his face. She said gaily:

- Good night, Willie dear!

Her room was warm and lightsome. A huge doll sat with her legs apart in the copious easy chair beside the bed. He tried to bid his tongue speak that he might seem at ease, watching her as she undid her gown, noting the proud conscious movements of her perfumed head.

As he stood silent in the middle of the room she came over to him and embraced him gaily and gravely. Her round arms held him firmly to her and he, seeing her face lifted to him in serious calm and feeling the warm calm rise and fall of her breast, all but burst into hysterical weeping.

Goffman (1963) says that full engrossments (such as rapture) cannot occur in public without involvement rules being broken, and earlier I said that rapture is not seen outside of private places. But maybe, after all, rapture can exist in gatherings, hidden away in very thin slices of time. ~~Thus rules of gatherings, hidden away in very thin slices of time.~~ Thus rules of gatherings may not be broken even when a state is experienced that has no consciousness to spare for their observance. And, more than that, I do not think it is always the case that

publicly enraptured persons are deemed out of order. My own entirely personal point of view here is that, very often, indulgent others can be a little enraptured themselves by shows of mutual engrossment, even when these are fist fights and slanging matches.

This concludes the essential material of this chapter, but before ending it in so many words I shall add some reflections on Sartre to show that my rhetoric does not lack the corroboration of other rhetorics whose theoretical equipment moreover is vastly superior to mine and only not used in this thesis because it has been my concern to manage without its ontological and psychological "whirligigs" (Jameson, 1976; Sartre, 1963).

### Conclusion

Sennett, I have shown, deplores mutual rapture because his analysis does not contain the possibility - which is central to mine - of this only really being worth calling rapture if it alternates with very precise possession. But another fundamental disagreement with my thesis seems to come from Jean-Paul Sartre (1963) in his book Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr. Sartre, the exact reverse of Sennett, lauds rapture and deplores possession, as in this passage which begins <sup>his</sup> by asking why Jean Genet seeks to identify with (enrapture himself in) others:

Why does he demand disgust and rebuffs, the other's indifference, the tortures of jealousy and, in the end, the despair that comes from the certainty of not being loved? And yet he must have something to gain by this. What is behind it all? For Genet, the answer is clear: love is a magical ceremonial whereby the lover steals the beloved's being in order to incorporate it into himself. . . . Thus Divine says to Gabriel: "You're myself," and Gabriel, decent chap that he is, smiles fatuously without realizing that his blood is being sucked from him. . . . To those who have a sense of belonging, to the just, to the honorable, this identification may seem a vain and absurd endeavor. But I would like to ask them whether they are quite sure of being themselves. How do I know that they have not obtained that inner peace of theirs by surrendering to a foreign protector who reigns in their stead? I know that the man whom I hear utter the words "We doctors..." is in bondage. This we doctors is his ego, a parasitical creature that sucks his blood. And even if he were only himself, there are a thousand ways of being delivered to oneself as to beasts, of feeding with one's own flesh an invisible and insatiable idol. For nobody may say the simple words: I am I. The best and freest of men may say: I exist. Which is already too much. For the others, I suggest that they use such formulae as: "I am Himself" or "I am so-and-so in person." If they do not aim at changing their skin, it is because the force that governs them does not allow them the leisure to do so; above all, it is because society has long since recognised and consecrated this symbiosis by according glory or simply honorability to the couple formed by the sick man and his parasite: it is a legitimate hell.

For Sartre, what possesses a man, then, is a "parasite" and the man possessed is "sick", and whole arrangement is "hell". Sartre, in the name of reciprocity, or deep inter-subjectivity, as strongly resists the idea of possessions within interaction as Sennett resists the idea of undifferentiated symbiosis. But I think Sartre confirms that things are as he describes them precisely by the depth of his disgust, and later on in Saint Genet, his theory of interaction does allow for both possession and rapture, when he calls possession "objectivity" and rapture "subjectivity".<sup>11</sup>

But even Sartre's terminology is purely cognitive, bereft of a word like rapture that gets one out of the trap of thinking interaction approximates to mutually imperfect cognition. The state of rapture is an emotional one, both of escape from identity and into new identification: rapture is an emotion of metamorphosis. What this kind of emotion is, I do not know, but I suggest that rapture cannot exist without emotion, for if it did it would be an irremediable loss of self, the "lost self" no longer registering, through emotion, being new-found, in which case its reconstitution would not be catharsis but a takeover, the creation of a replica human, a zombie. Interaction, then, is about escape, and escape is emotionally toned. (When the escape is too effective, when a person is too lost, then his home self, his former prison, looms for him as a safe haven, into which from his spacious disorientation he will reversedly escape.) Why should this escape be emotional in its nature? Is it because persons are all the time much greater than they can cognitively appreciate, "ritual beings" as I have tried to capture this in words, who are mobilized even down in their biology when they are released from their limitations?

But the escape may be blocked. The disposition to rapture might confront a human object that cuts down to a small size its would-be inamorata. This human object not only may refuse a person's rapture but also may disenrapture a person with himself, because the object is a negativized possession, an acted closing of a preferred ritual realm. Negative possession draws comments like, "I hate the sight of him." (It is perfectly appropriate to my analysis that it is the "sight" of him that is hated more than is the "him".) And for he who feels it, hate is the emotion that accompanies his annihilation

of its objects, usually in imagination, to make room for the blocked and thwarted ritual person. So hate, a central social emotion, is explained by rapture,<sup>12</sup> though, of course, blocked rapture may vent itself into the possessions, often seemingly there for just this purpose, of artists and entertainers. (One would expect, then, that the most ardent fans, or, in the political sphere, the most fanatical followers of charismatic leaders, will be those who are most trodden down by their fellow men, and this seems to be the case.)

So, the imperative to be a person, as I have defined persons, seems very powerful, but one must ask why. Why the endless complaint, "I just want to be treated like a human being." Why do people want to be themselves, knowing themselves to be what they do not know, and not knowing this cognitively when cognitive life is not their life as it is lived?

Perhaps one way not to find out is to construct cognitive social analyses that ignore love and hate. And perhaps theories that assume the human is a cognitive actor must end up finding that people are stupid, just because people identify with others and also refuse identifications with others on the basis of what cannot be known in advance. Cognitive theories, moreover, will not understand people in as much as people are not seen as enrapturing, but people might well understand that many cognitive theories are unenrapturing (even when the theories themselves are not understood) and so refuse identifications with them, which, whether these theories are right or wrong by any imaginable criteria, will result in their social disregard, and so also result in their having no chance of becoming self-fulfilling.

## Notes

- 1 Barthes (1977), in his autobiography, says that his idea that wrestlers "unlock Justice" comes from a phrase of Baudelaire's - "the emphatic truth of gesture in the great circumstances of life." Barthes goes on: "Baudelaire called this excess of pose the numen (which is the silent gesture of the gods pronouncing on human fate). The numen is hysteria frozen, eternalised, trapped, since it is at last held motionless, pinioned by a long stare" (p 134).
- 2 Artists, if "originality of expression" defines art, are not ahead of their times, by this logic, so much as non-artists are behind the present. The "unacknowledged legislators of mankind" (Shelley) and the "antennae of the race" (T S Eliot) are "ahead" because they are more responsive to current fashions than non-artists do not yet see as fashions.
- 3 But there are special occasions, like the performances of plays in theatres, where an absence of rapture at post-session would be embarrassing, and, then, if it is genuinely absent, it may well have to be feigned.
- 4 Norman Mailer (1970) describes hippies marching on the Pentagon in 1967 as a sort of vast troupe following the enrapturing Beatles of Sgt Pepper:

The hippies were there in great number, perambulating down the hill, many dressed like the legions of Sgt Pepper's band, some were gotten up like Arab sheiks, or in Park Avenue doormen's greatcoats, others like Rogers and Clark of the West, Wyatt Earp, Kit Carson, Daniel Boone in buckskin, some had grown mustaches to look like Have Gun, Will Travel - Paladin's surrogate was here! - and wild Indians with feathers, a hippie gotten up like Batman, another like Claude Rains in The Invisible Man - his face wrapped in a turban of bandages and he wore a black satin top hat. A host of these troops wore capes, beat-up khaki capes, slept on, used as blankets, towels, improvised duffel bags; or fine capes, orange linings, or luminous rose linings, the edges ragged, near a tatter, the threads ready to feather, but a musketeer's hat on the head. One hippie may have been dressed like Charles



Chaplin; Buster Keaton and W C Fields could have come to the ball; there were Martians and Moon-men and a knight unhorsed who stalked about in the weight of real armor. There were to be seen a hundred soldiers in Confederate gray, and maybe there were two or three hundred hippies in officers' coats of Union dark-blue. They had picked up their costumes where they could, in surplus stores, and Blow-your-mind shops, Digger free emporiums, and psychedelic caches of Hindu junk. There were soldiers in Foreign Legion uniforms, and tropical bush jackets, San Quentin and Chino, California striped shirt and pants, British copies of Eisenhower jackets, hippies dressed like Turkish shepherds and Roman senators, gurus, and samurai in dirty smocks. They were close to being assembled from all the inter-sections between history and the comic books, between legend and television, the Biblical archetypes and the movies.

- 5 Waiting for Godot, the play in which "nothing happens, twice" is nonetheless a calculated misrepresentation. Audiences, not believing that the tramps really will go to the nowhere of which they speak, are dramatically surprised when the tramps do actually end up there. This, because the face-value words must prove they are only face-value, in the theatre, just as often as they are proved not to be.
- 6 Societal short-circuits exist everywhere. All those who write about life, for example, try to make it seem interpretable as it had not seemed in life - or else they do not make sense, though some forms of deliberate senselessness make the sense that nothing makes sense - and so sociologists too must be dramatists. There is no harm in this as long as sociologists do not start thinking that sociology is more important than life, for it goes without saying that it is only because life is important that sociological and other texts about life have their secondary importance. Of course, the sociological short-circuit will be ignored if the voltage is too small, and, to follow the metaphor, volts are dramatic human enactments.
- 7 William James said that people do not cry because they are sad but are sad because they cry. Eisenstein also



writes (in Barna, 1973) of a member of an audience: "...he must, by way of fantasy, give free rein to base promptings and criminal tendencies in his nature. . . through the play of the real emotions that go with his fantasy complicity in the horrors perpetrated on stage."

- 8 Freud relieved his neurotic patients by collaboratively rewriting their inner psychodramas in such a way that the final denouement completed hitherto looping neuroses. However, rapture will be its negative, shame, if on emerging from the Freudian possession the patient recognises it as more demeaning than his earlier representations of himself to himself, and catharsis will only "cure" if after rapture - usually some admixture of this with shame - the new possession of the enraptured person has been enriched during the loss of the old possession, by his disowning the shamed self and cleaving to his enrapturing possibilities.
- 9 People recognise both their need for sublime expression and their incapacity for it in locutions such as, "it was indescribable," or, "words fail me." These are second-best performances that at least point to things so enrapturing that their possession by words would not "do them justice."
- 10 But it is possible, contra the 1970 Sennett, to go from caring to not caring, from having an identity to not having one. This is what Goffman saw happening to many of the patients travelling down betrayal funnels into the asylum wards he researched in the mid-fifties.
- 11 Sartre (1963) says that at one limit each person is an object (and is this only for a transcendental subject) and that at the opposite limit each person is a subject (this is only possible if objectivity completely liquidates itself). Between the two limits, persons are not homogeneous: "We are not quite objects and not quite subjects." Goffman's "embarrassment", for example, occurs when a person in his subjectivity experiences the object he is for another's

subjectivity. Thus far Sartre has not said any more than that persons are never wholly enraptured and never wholly possessed, and that auto-rapture can be negativized when it suddenly sees the possession it is for someone else in the most unflattering moral light possible. Negative auto-rapture, of course, is shame, a feeling of being wholly taken up by an unwanted image of a person who moreover is oneself, the perception of whose form having the effect on one's moral outlook that sudden sobriety would have on a drunk. Negative rapture, by this line of argument, would be shame by proxy, felt for the person by whom <sup>one</sup> would be used to being enraptured. Children who disgrace their families, persons who commit acts so heinous that their spouses no longer dare "show their faces" in public, people who make their companions wish the floorboards would open up for them, all these and many other unstable surfriders of the breaking waves of social forms sink not only themselves when they crash into the "unnamable" (Beckett, 1958) but their loved ones too, whose negative rapture is a further argument for the existence of its positive counterpart and for its nature as I have described it. Sartre goes on to note that solitude has less to do with the physical separation of beings than with the states of persons when the social relationship is "lived in despair," which is to say, is lived with no feeling that it is there or is being lived. Criminal societies (not all of them) like homosexual societies (not all of them) and like the society of females (in male-dominated worlds) tend to be peopled solitudes because their members cannot escape the shame that awaits them when they emerge their "relative" societies that are defined by the wider, shaming society, and expressions of ashamedness within these relative societies further intensify individual solitudes, occasioning even more negative rapture. Solitude then is a result of not being able to become enraptured in another person, and it may come about because everywhere the possessions that

are seen trigger off negative rapture or because when rapture is possible negative auto-rapture sets in. Whole communities may be experienced by their members as the social occasions for solitude, just because nowhere is any member worthy of becoming enraptured in and everywhere is every member fully conscious of this unworthiness, and it may be the case, I suggest, that calls for "community" reflect this perceived state of affairs, the call going unheeded when it reminds its hearers of this state of affairs that can only be reversed by a member or members finding ways to act shamelessly. In most societies, however, Sartre says, persons oscillate from being objects ("victorious conformists") or, in my terms, possessed people, to being subjects ("defeated opponents") or enraptured people, the words "conformist" and "opponent" serving Sartre as moral parameters of humanness.

- 12 Hate very often calls forth hate and this cycle can only be broken by forgiveness. A person who is forgiven for a ritual crime is reinstated by his victim and his victim's sympathizers as a ritual being who once again, in principle, can be enrapturing. Forgiveness, then, is a delicate ritual state because if it comes too quickly to a victim it can show that he lacks self-respect and if too slowly that, again, he has too little honour, since he is not "big enough" to readily overcome his fear of the ritual offender. So it might be expected that genuine forgiveness is rarer than the feigned kind, it being socially expedient to pretend that an offender no longer offends even though his offence still rankles. An exception here is Jesus Christ, whose quick forgiveness always redounded to his ritual credit, because his obvious lack of rancour showed him to be of a ritual order that it was impossible for others to offend. However, during his forgiveness, any sign whatsoever of his "being offended" would have destroyed his self-respect in others' eyes, for the forgiveness would then have been seen as meek submission to superior power or, at best, merely

strategic situational politicking. Presenting a flawlessly performed forgiveness, then, is one way to rise above offenders, since they will not believe such a state is only as it seems. It follows that the performance of forgiveness is greatly facilitated by its being felt, though, as I have indicated, its being performed may encourage its being felt. Here again a person's "going through the motions" might lead directly to his seeming to come from them alone, if, of course, the motions do not seem to be motions that are being gone through.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS<sup>1</sup>

The strength and strangeness of art, and in particular of literature since its medium is the medium of daily human relationship, derive from our feeling that we both are and are not in the presence of another human being; there is a voice which we can hear but which cannot hear us, a presence that can be passionately felt to the point of an enobling superstition, rather as Keats felt Shakespeare to be his "presider", but which does not need to be mystical. In the same way, any great work of literature which teaches and changes us is a presence and a presider. "Required both to be present and to not be present": Goffman's core of embarrassment is a core of literature. "Because of possessing multiple selves the individual may find he is required both to be present and to not be present on certain occasions. Embarrassment ensues: the individual finds himself being torn apart, however gently." Corresponding to the oscillation of his conduct is the oscillation of his self. Part of such oscillation is between the sense in which the role of the reader is truly passive (Wordsworth's "wise passiveness" is attuned to books as to nature) and the sense in which the role of a reader is truly active. Some people find this duality more than they can take, and are fretful or embarrassed by not knowing what they are supposed to do as a reader; it is not just their attention to the book, but the book's attention to them, which discomposes and even threatens them.\*

I began with the idea that people when they interact treat one another as ritual beings. This was taken from the theories of Erving Goffman, which show that interactions are moral situations whose analysis demands that people be regarded as sacred. Sacrality, however, is not an unvarying attribute and it may even be greatly dependent on acting ability. This assertion is really founded on a commonsense appreciation that

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\* Ricks, Christopher (1974) Keats and Embarrassment

in any interaction a person can be degraded or exalted either by himself or by others or, not infrequently, by others because of what he does to himself. I sought to further elucidate this last category by describing, in apposition to each other, two appearance-oriented groups, punks and nurses, and to make sense of their conduct I found it necessary to use the concept "ritual power". The major part of my thesis thereafter is developed around this concept in a rhetoric which would have it, for example, that total interaction is one person's "rapture" at another's perfect "possession" by an entity often called "self". But first, the merchants of filth and how they make power out of it.

#### Ritual Power of Punks and Nurses

Punks use<sup>2</sup> their understanding of a societal pollution scheme (Douglas, 1966) in order to systematically contaminate themselves so that other people will rear back from them as if from "untouchables". By doing this the punks achieve a ritual power of an inverted kind, for they come to seem as hard to approach on equal terms as persons of very high status. Furthermore, the very deliberation of the punks' self degradations gives them yet more ritual power, since they appear to be capable of rising above the opprobrium they excite - or else they surely would divest themselves of their punk appearance - and thereby create for themselves the ritual power that

can withstand contaminations that would desacralise others. All the ritual power of punks, arising from their conduct as it is seen and also from its evident election over alternative "life-styles", is won from appearances alone.

The specifically punk appearance, by being fashionable, provides would-be punks with a ready-made, unambiguous visual statement which also has the look of collectivity. Not only that but an individual punk is protected from being seen as a lone deviant because he is recognised as an instance of a widespread type, yet, all the while, his fashion, by being deviant itself, magnifies his "legitimate deviancy" because his person is a loud reminder of the society-wide presence of very many similar persons. But, like all fashions in the period before they become outmoded, punk seems to be of a different order to other fashions, being mistaken for a social movement whose members can feel that they are united against contrary styles of conduct. At all times the punk therefore is activated by a behavioural logic that runs like this:

"When you walk into a place where people can see you, you want to look as repulsive and repugnant as possible."<sup>3</sup> The nursing fashion, on the other hand, guarantees for its wearers that they will be impervious to and lifted above whatever might contaminate them, and zealously it is kept pure because nurses, facing considerable contamination, believe that they are the better sealed against filth, intrinsic and symbolic, the more they look like nurses. Thus nurses, regardless of the tasks they must perform, try, before all else, to be

immediately identifiable as nurses, which incidentally accounts for the world-wide uniformity of their appearances. Where punks play the behavioural trick of degrading their appearances so as to appear like people who beneath their appearances have such strong ritual power that nothing can pollute or defile them, nurses work the same trick the other way and sacralize themselves so as to visually testify to the fact that neither the defiling persons and substances (with which they are in contact) nor their dirty duties can penetrate them. So the nurse rises above contaminants because she is untouched by these, and the unchallengeable proof that she is unsullied lies in her looking exactly as a nurse should look, that is, like someone with an extraordinary ritual power that can withstand contaminations that would desacralize others. Nurses, like punks, then, acquire ritual power merely through their manipulation of appearances.

"Ritual power" may now be defined as the amount of "ritualness" a person has within interaction, and as such it is something more than the ritualness that Goffman has said must be respected between persons. So ritual power can be won from interactional conduct alone and is not just a property to be lost or, at best, after being lost, restored to a former level. It should be noted here, of course, that, since ritual power belongs primarily to interactions, it is not the same as status, which is a given societal quantity. Nevertheless it is quite sensible to say that a person with commensurate ritual power will "live up to" a particular role



expectation, or, alternatively, if his ritual power is insufficient, fail to live up to it.

Punks and nurses, then, gain ritual power through their exploitation of pollution systems and their power lies mainly in their costumes and costume-associated conduct. However, ritual power is not only a function of systematic communications in the language of pollution codes.

### Fashionable Ritual

Another kind of ritual power (besides that secured from organized orientations to pollution) can be brought into interactions by persons when variants of fashionable human exemplars effectively possess them.

This proposition is best understood if it is approached from the idea that conduct, being first and foremost ritual conduct, enjoys its highest esteem when it is fashionable conduct. This must be so, because unfashionable conduct, always inappropriate, is necessarily offensive, and, since fashions only relate to other fashions and only obey laws internal to themselves, the correct action has to be the fashionable one. (Of course, it is assumed here that all conduct is appearance, of which clothing is only its especially obvious facet, and that all appearances are governed by fashion, so that in the world of appearances, which in this thesis is the whole world, fashion holds sway.) But, where

do people get their notions of fashionable conduct?

Perhaps the well-established fact that in Anglo-American culture most persons spend a lot of their time spectating dramatised conduct on television might be cited to support the hypothesis that models of proper interactional performance are increasingly to be found on television screens. Professional actors, then, may well have come to "embody the forms of intelligible conduct", and those actors who are seen most are those who are most as they "should" be, behaving in the height of contemporary fashion. Thus, conduct, from this perspective, begins to look like creative mimicry, judged right or wrong not for any intrinsic moral intention - insofar as this does not seem to satisfyingly express itself - but according to whether it is aesthetically apt.

The Balinese, as Clifford Geertz (1975) interprets them, are an apparently extreme example of persons whose predominant concern is to be effective aesthetically, and they repay consideration at this point. Geertz says that the social life of the Balinese is both a solemn game and a studied drama in which etiquette, dance, and formal ritual are always melting into one another. The need of each Balinese person to please all his others creates a flexible mosaic of conduct held together by the surface tension of a pervasive Balinese stage-fright called "lek". (Lek is the fear that the forms might collapse back into the beings creating them, which in societal terms would cause fissures through which unnamable and unclassifiable and therefore terrifying social entities might

be glimpsed.) Geertz, however, feels that the Balinese show one another too much respect by always trying to be the best selves that they can be for other best selves. It is as though the comparative lack of obviously gratuitous and graceful behaviours in Anglo-American culture induces Geertz into appraising his own culture's conduct as not principally aesthetic. Here, I think, Geertz falls victim to his American culture's heroic materialism which is premised on a belief that if you work hard enough you will produce something more valuable than a simple picture of yourself working hard. But, and the kind of ethnocentricity Geertz reveals supports this contention, conduct in Anglo-American culture is most effective insofar as it is not seen to be performed in just those cases, therefore, in which performance is good enough to completely conceal both the performer and the idea of a performer; then performance is, whatever its performer's attitudes and beliefs about it, so aesthetic as to render parallel "inner" commentaries (psychology) redundant. For example, *tact*, whose practice permits tentative, new forms to burgeon without premature censure, shows by the unceasing need for it in all interactions that it is precisely during the play of aesthetic conduct that the ritual, moral self is most exposed, contrary to an Anglo-American myth that when the forms of conduct are all that are of concern between persons their ritual selves must be hidden. A person's ritual presence, then, despite the Geertzian tendency to separate morality from beauty, would appear to be congruent with his best enactment of himself. This moral

enactment, furthermore, is in terms borrowed from professionalised stage interpretations of current conduct fashions, seemingly without a great deal of reference to the morality of acts as this may be measured against absolute values where these are considered either out of date or too modern, the morality being that an act be the "done thing to do", and the current fashion of doing being seen as anything else except a fashion.

There is much resistance to such an idea, and, in the theatre, this has come most powerfully from Antonin Artaud, who advocated a method of acting that would cut directly through what he read as oppressively deceptive outer forms. In everyday life, too, many would-be authentic people have echoed Artaud's call for persons to drop their masks so as to let their real selves emerge. But such calls ask human life to perform a contradiction: a person cannot show himself to be anything whatsoever - even if this would be Artaud's pure force of life - without this too being conduct of a kind, which, the more desperately it attempts to be unmediated by the human physiology, will the less make deep sense in any sophisticated code. Real selves, then, if considered to be damagingly masked by outer forms that in principle can be removed, in fact cannot emerge except as behavioural screams that will always lack the expressive subtlety - and force therefore - they could have if they said what they meant, for example, through performances of articulacy in a language of words. De-aestheticised or authentic man, in this pers-

pective, is much less than a man, rather more closely resembling Samuel Beckett's (1958) Unnamable who "is nothing but a shapeless heap, without a face capable of reflecting the niceties of a torment", and, though the Unnamable certainly exists, and very frighteningly for the Balinese at least, such a being is bound to say for itself, through the medium of Samuel Beckett in this case, that "it has not yet been my good fortune to establish with any degree of accuracy what I am, where I am, whether I am words among words, or silence in the midst of silence", whereas Samuel Beckett, his author par excellence, by dint of his aesthetic concentration in words is exactly defined by them - and by them more than by any other aspect of his conduct - as precisely himself and no one else, the "real" Samuel Beckett.

So, to be taken seriously as a person it is necessary not only to have a relatively serious status but to play it with adequate panache. That persons are expected to restrict themselves to the playing of one self may be merely a societal expedient to prevent confusion, and the uniformities exacted by fashions of their adherents obviously further reduce complexity by simplifying individuals into broad and easily legible social categories. (An unremitting social rule may be discerned here, that, whatever a person can be, he must not be senseless. So strong is this rule that many people become convinced that sense is built into the universe specifically for human comprehension - and so human beings, as it were, must be involuntarily intelligible to whatever "depth"

the perceiver chooses to look. My own conviction, drawn from Popper (1977), has it the other way round, that acts of Kantian comprehension project the simplifications of sense into an overrich universe of indefinitely related signs so as to liberate persons from other humanly-imposed limitations on the human. Needless to add, that is only the beginning of comprehension, for in its wake come acts of comprehension about acts of comprehension, and so on, either creatively developing the initial guesswork or traducing that into reified orthodoxies to ends either of absolute banality or wonderful illumination or, as in my case, a fitful show of intelligence that while it can be intelligent about itself nonetheless does not know with any certainty (if it does desire certainty) whether it is worthwhile or worthless, to itself or to others, or how much of either, though it could talk about that too, but only at the same level of unknowing.)

Thus it is that persons possess themselves with recognisable and stable social identities in respect of a societal moral conduct scheme wherein self-possession itself is highly valued. By virtue of the quality of this possession, aside from its formal identity, persons may procure extra ritual power that in the theatre is known as "presence". Presence, as I use the word, is not some sort of peculiar emanation from a hidden real self so much as possession by a clearly visible outer self, whom the possessed person as it were operates with the capabilities of the possessing self. Artaud, I think, wanted actors to be possessed by life itself, but his project

was bound to give audiences nothing save the spectacle of people behaving as if so possessed. Yet it is to the stage or to television that people turn when they wish to watch experiments with the ritual code, for stage conduct is not only unusually self-conscious and hyper-aestheticised but also safely framed from practical effects. Thus, "lifelike conduct in its most pure and heightened forms is dramatised conduct, that is, the ritually live conduct of knowing possession". It does need to be added, however, that though, on stage, professional actors are regularly alive with a ritual power surpassing by far the ritual power the majority of their audiences ever attain, off-stage they are not treated as ritually very serious persons. This may be because off-stage they willingly, though sometimes with great difficulty, give up the character they were playing on stage. If, however, an actor chose to stay in his stage character, he would retain his ritual power (provided he could disarm the plentiful discussions he would certainly encounter). So persons with names like James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, and Humphrey Bogart, who have not given up their characters even years after their physical decay, are very alive in many social worlds where, volte face, their recorded performances are taken as excerpts from their mundane lives. (Perhaps, with varying degrees of intent, the reading of the filmed performance as an episode of an ongoing mythic existence is fostered by the person so filmed.) The power these persons exert, I suggest, comes of their having presence, which for the time being can

be understood as an expertly controlled possession that seems at play within unstable moral ambiances, effective only so long as good and evil (fashionable against unfashionable conduct) come into sharp relief on the body and face of the "star", or in the voice, if it belongs to someone like Billie Holiday, or in the tenor saxophone, if Charlie Parker, or in the words , if Shakespeare. These people from the grave, through electronic circuitry or print, come closer to every one of their fans than any one of their fans' loved ones, because they look so hypnotically as if they have to be so precisely what they are and what - in their absence of closure - they are not. But the role of actor, it might be countered, is so lightweight that it vitiates any enactment an actor might perform, just because he has been known to be an actor - for example, Ronald Reagan. This is true, I think, but only because actors want it that way, for what their audiences do not see is that actors' choices of the unserious actor self off-stage are serious choices to the precise degree that actors have acting talent. I myself take actors more seriously than any other type of person whom I meet, now that I understand that they play themselves unseriously in everyday life. Whether or not - to continue this digression - ritual power as a James Dean (an actor who never "comes off it") exercises it is a form of coercion, and whether, if it is, it is immoral, as Plato against his own inclinations decided poets must be, will have to remain questions unanswered here. But this is as good a place as any for me to reflect on the fact that I am writing this text one week after the attempted assass-



ination of Ronald Reagan by an individual whom the FBI claims identified himself with the character Travis Bickle in Martin Scorsese's film Taxi Driver. Universally, the would-be assassin has been written off as insane on account of his "muddled identity", based, so the media put it, on a fictional character who himself was "muddled". Now last year I chose an epigraph for this thesis from the words of Travis Bickle in Taxi Driver, because I thought that that character was one of the truest I had seen in the sphere of entertainment in the last several years. Similarly, I think that Reagan's assailant is not a freak and that the very strength of the media effort to so stigmatize him is a panic reaction to this distressing truth. My argument must be that a good performance by Robert de Niro, who played Travis Bickle, evoked another that in its turn set off a world-wide media psychosis. The world watched John Warnock Hinckley fire his gun at the President of the United States of America, just as Hinckley watched Robert de Niro, and the really significant difference, in my view, between Hinckley and all the other people who have watched Robert de Niro is that de Niro's performance was more real to Hinckley, for the reason that he seems not to have perspectivised it against any other competing performances, probably because he had no one dearer to him than the characters in Taxi Driver. (Thus the responsibility for the assassination attempt lies as much with the film as with Hinckley. The moral criticism of Hinckley is that he aspired above his ritual station: he could only challenge the President

by using a real gun and dealing out real death, which of course is to choose to use terror rather than genuine ritual power.) When the ritual imperative is irresistible, in a world that Andy Warhol, another human target (of the feminist assassin Valerie Solanas), so perspicaciously has said would only be satisfactory if each citizen were world-famous for fifteen minutes, the pressure to be interesting cannot be dismissed as a pathological condition. Naturally, as soon as a new assassination hits the headlines, Hinckley will be forgotten and, as soon as an actor walks out of his limelight to resume the possession called "actor", he loses his ritual power, which only goes to show, at the end of this long digression, that ritual power, as I have claimed, can be entirely interaction-dependent.

Thus am I proposing certain extensions to Erving Goffman's ritual rhetoric, for, although Goffman often refers to persons' competences in performing, he does not examine the consequences for interaction of these varying between interactants, and I suggest that ritual power - human worth in its most human sense - accrues to competence. Goffman, what is more, tends to slight the secrets of performers as being "petty" (Goffman, 1971), and I further suggest that this is not only because he separates the ritual frame from the dramaturgical frame but also because he ignores the fact that people can be very deeply moved by the

good performances that are possessions in concentrated human form. Cless (1979) says that possessions work best when the performer produces original conduct that is self-evidently right, and from this I conclude that ritual power indeed can be gained by acts that, while retaining full interpretability by being fashionable, are yet quite original, and that ritual power - even if Goffman's rules are not broken - is indeed lost when conduct does not include new forms and variants, in which latter case it can, by looking less than fully alive, also seem not lifelike enough to be fully human.

Though the concept "possession" is now current in my analysis, I do not wish to define it summarily, but to let it show its meaning through the uses to which I put it. Freud (1978) has given reasons for a similar refusal to define his concept "instinct", and these I think state the terms of my excuse:

...it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from the new observations alone. Such ideas - which will later become the basic concepts of the science - are still more indispensable as the material is further worked over. They must at first necessarily possess some degree of indefiniteness; there can be no question of any clear delimitation of their content. So long as they remain in this condition, we come to an understanding about their meaning by making repeated references to the material of observation from which they appear to have been derived, but upon which, in fact, they have been imposed. Thus, strictly speaking, they are in the nature of conventions - although everything depends on their not being arbitrarily chosen but determined by their having significant relations to the empirical material, relations that we seem to sense before we can clearly recognise and demonstrate them.

The purest possession is likely to become the centre of attention in any gathering, and it is the case that, say, a seizure of epilepsy - perhaps the most captivating performance a person can mount - has a long human history of being interpreted as the visitation of spirits more powerful than men. I have implicitly proposed in this thesis that interactions should not be analysed for their rules so much as understood, however this can be done (and The Stalking Ground is only an experimental piping of ritual life into social science), as occasions of ritual manifestation. But to arrive at this conclusion it is first essential to reorient to the topic of human interaction by declining to make the, I think, uninteresting assumption that what can be usefully said about, for example, a boring interaction, however that is defined, is all that can be said about another interaction in which persons are electrified, as though it is enough that both occasions comprise people paying attention to one another. It is the dimension of possession (one that is also indicated by "narratibility") that I believe creates a necessary distance from certain sociological worlds that I find, despite their powerful argumentation (I am thinking of ethnomethodology), too bland to be true. I shall now summarise what I have said about possession.

### The Dimension of Possession

Performances, particularly of actors, are often rated

along a scale from non-seizure to total possession, and in this light social variations of a person's conduct may look less those of a "constant" defined person who plays a succession of parts than like total changes of person whose single actor, the body, is not a person until it acts. Interaction now can be seen not as the making of moves in a formal game but as an essentially supernatural ritual in which flesh-and-blood persons are closer to mediums than to strategic players.

Life, as it may exist through the possessions of persons in interaction, can only come, therefore, from a ritual realm which is created wittingly or unwittingly, as if it is somewhere they are coming from, by the visible conduct of persons. Thus a society belle strung with diamonds seems to be an envoy from some luxuriously resplendent amnion while the nurse in her carefully-shaped white hat displays her intimate spiritual affinity to the long-deceased Florence Nightingale. Such an appreciation as this of what can be going on in interactions is inevitably heightened among professional actors, and it is for this reason that "camp" conduct (burlesquing the sacred) is so prevalent in the theatre world, for camp is a means by which persons can block one another's routine creation of ritual realms so as to make their interactions less fraught with significance.

By describing conduct in these terms, one can easily see that the differences between the conduct of, for example, a great performer on stage and, say, subjects being studied in a

laboratory or a workshop amount to a crucial dimension of interaction. If such a dimension is accepted it follows that interactions which have some of the feel of effective drama contain more of what is specifically interactive in human conduct than do those that are unclear to or of only superficial interest to interactants, the uninteresting ones, of course, ceasing to qualify as interactions when the interest of all its parties finally dies.

Further, it seems to be a consequence of the supernatural possibilities within interaction that persons are accredited what I have termed "narratibility", the sense-making and even interest-generating capacity to coherently perform themselves. This must be, since it is a condition of being dramatic that one dramatises intelligibly (i.e. through a narration of sorts) and it is a condition of being human that one is dramatic, so much so that, robbed of narratibility, persons feel disoriented, senseless, and worthless. Thus the writers Joan Didion and Charles Dickens both show how personal confusion or a sense of incoherent possession, which is the same thing, can be reorganized by recasting the self as the hero of its own narration, thereby restoring the ritual worth arising out of narratibility. (It follows that the inordinately intricate senselessness of life may be the powerful prompter of people's never-ending work of storytelling and the reason for their non-stop activity of self-possessing.) The idea of narratibility, or imposition of historical pattern, now connects directly to the idea of

control, for even the wildest possession takes up some form that can be seen as "wild possession".

### The Control of Possession

Possession on its own is not enough to transform the human physiology into a person, for possession - to be seen as what it is - must always be controlled. The apparently universal practice of tact, for example, is evidence that control is always exercised in interaction, for the tactful person is his "better self", a human creation whose precise characterisation depends both on its sensitive appreciation of and accommodation to difficult situations (which may be all of them). Anglo-American culture, moreover, is one that will not allow that persons can be uncontrolled; thus psychopathic conduct, the most asocial that can be imagined, is attributed to a "psychopathic personality", which is held to be the more clearly indicated the more the conduct is uncontrolled. This type of nominalist magic, of course, shows that the desire to control the uncontrolled if not present in the subject will be met by him in his human objects.

What happens if "responsibility" (Hymes, 1975) for performance, or control as I phrase it, is not assumed? Becker (1962) found that depressives consistently fail to present selves of a kind to which proper deference can be paid, and so, receiving insufficient deference, become further depressed until a point may be reached where the only means left to them of regaining control may be the refusal to control any self

at all. Now just as loss of or abrogation of control in this way is a full social withdrawal so the maintenance of control might be all that allows a person to remain the social person he would be. Thus, Mishima's (1979) Hagakure code - "the slightest flaw in word or deed causes the collapse of one's philosophy of life" - and Stanislavsky's theory of the subtext both explicitly state that all acts must be invested with "readable" thought. This strongly recommends the idea that a person is most himself when his possession by himself is in his fullest control.

The real person, then, is not to be encountered in unguarded moments or at times of distress, for on such occasions he will tend to lose the particularity that made him what he was for others, and, instead, disintegrating now into loosely-organized and comparatively illegible human behaviours, his selves will unfocus. (That so many people are unoriginal in deed and word, yet at the same time live under the impress of a cultural myth that the differences between persons, not their similarities, allow them to be "individuals", would explain the assumption that a person's uniqueness must be out of sight. The perceived uniformities of conduct together with the belief that individuality is the mark of a "real" person may be impelling people to think that some blueprint or template or programme or inner composition that is theirs alone is hidden somewhere inside them. I have already shown that, if this be so, real selves



are doomed to be forever unseen because they are "unemergable" except through codes that must destroy entities defined as essentially antipathetic to codes. Those enslaved to beliefs in hidden real selves therefore inhibit their creative generation of original communication - because they act as if their conduct cannot fully represent them - and must travel backwards from other people, ever more deeply regressing towards total unintelligibility.) Furthermore, microanalysts such as Birdwhistell (1971) and Scheflen (1973) have conclusively demonstrated that even the "unpossessed" conduct Hymes designates "behaviour pure and simple", which, on the face of it, would seem least capable of conveying self, is always minutely attuned to audience reaction exactly according to Hymes' definition of performance. In social life, then, people show themselves as what they are, and they are physiologies trying to communicate in languages that in every single case have to be learned from scratch. (Of course, people can choose to misrepresent themselves, and that, as spies or secret adulterers for example, they can do so over long periods of time and under very fine scrutiny proves the point that an enacted self until gainsaid by discrepant enactments is the only social self there is.)

It is as if the human judgement of conduct is too harsh a measure of the man in much of contemporary Anglo-American culture, for everywhere its members try to assume that, in some unspecified place and using some unspecifiable language,

some other entity than that given conscious being by its forms of conduct alone (as they possess human raw material) pulls the puppet strings of a behaving person. Paradoxically, however, it might be the very cogency of possessions, in creating habitable ritual realms out of visible cues, that prompts other persons - or possessions - to go regressively searching in those realms - now possessed by them - as if realms were strong enough to exist apart from the acts that bring them into being. What happens to the man lost in someone else's possession (which, of course, comes to be his own) is that he foregoes his own separate ritual development. Confronted with worlds he would understand, he enters them as if he would find their origins and somehow deal with these direct, without the mediation of imaginative constructs. In this sense, he is literally "taken in". Unless he can repossess himself, his articulations now will be those of a "mouthpiece" for another's realm. So those who, for fear of ridicule or for other reasons, will not produce performances of their own by properly responding to different performances, will sink into an ideology which - dumbly, because it does not like to speak - thinks that the way to find out about the self among other selves is by some different route than being a self for other selves who are also being themselves for others. A society of such "taken in" people, audiences to their own non-performances, will be a sort of amoebic stasis in which there will be an increasingly unthinking absorption in increasingly unabsorbing human material.

Richard Sennett (1977) calls this psychosocial sump "the tyranny of intimacy," portraying it as a permanent and total encounter group in which there is no possibility of any encounters. But this is not to say that the practice of psychologising about interaction has not produced great performances. The work of Freud and Jung, tracking back to "first causes" of Oedipus complex or archetypes may have been more illuminating than the writing of Samuel Beckett, but, like all psychology, it can only exist if its phenomena are discovered in the sociological realm of interaction and if its reporting takes place in the sociological medium of verbal language. Thus Jung does not discover his "internal society" (Rowan, 1978) until he has put it before himself in the form of words that he recognises as his various possessions; but, instead of then conceding that he has found a new way of seeing himself from the outside, he begins to think that all along this was how he must have been on the inside. (Obviously, there is complex matter "inside", but it is not comprehensible until repossessed outside.) I argue here no more than that he who would explore the mind must behave as though he has created it from its visible behaviour, as Ryle (1949) and Coulter (1979) insist. However, the idea of "inner men" deterministically manipulating persons is perfectly adjusted to the idea of a ritual realm, only failing to be logical by ignoring the fact that the ritual realm is definitionally absent until someone seems to be arriving from it.

So much, then, for the pathetic fallacy that, beneath our second-hand gestures and borrowed phrases and copied attitudes, we are there, pristine little souls, treasure troves of authenticity, who only need the courtship of people who love us to be charmed out of the deep recesses of the psyche into which hostile environments have driven us. No, whatever we do belong to - if to anything, even if to others, the equally unbelonging - it is not to ourselves, for there is no one inside any one of us, and, worse yet, every time we do or say what someone else has said and done, we automate our conduct, becoming dummies then. So perhaps the only way out of the semiological scrapheap we spend a lifetime assiduously turning ourselves into is to "make it new" (Pound) in hopes that any one of us might voice some thought quite beyond the capacity of cellular matter, which furthermore might be heard by others, whom conceivably it might invigorate. "But what about 'being natural'? Don't we often relax and quite naturally let our normal selves show through these creative behavioural dances that surely are not our only warrant for thinking ourselves human?" Again, no: I am afraid the phrase "natural conduct" is a contradiction in terms, as follows.

#### Natural Conduct and the Ritual Imperative

The form of controlled possession predominating as an ideal to be aimed at in Anglo-American culture is "natural conduct" which is the less seen as performance the more controlled it is. Unlike other forms of controlled possession that command interest within interactions, natural

conduct tries to pass itself off as the next best thing to no conduct at all, as if a natural person were to be hermetically sealed from any suspicion that being a person is not wholly guaranteed by the human physiology. Natural conduct is thus required to look unforced and spontaneous as though it cannot help but be exactly as it is, having its unusual harmony with whatever interactional rules govern the contexts in which it is found by happy coincidence, quite "naturally". However, it can easily look too self-possessed, when what shows is not a natural self but a self that looks as if it is acting self-possession, and it can be successfully feigned for though, to quote Strindberg (1968), "It is not easy to be charming when one is mad with rage," it is nevertheless not impossible either. Not only that, but to be complimented for being natural is to be highly praised, which fact alone indicates that it is difficult to bring off the performance of naturalness. Being natural is, then, as Evreinoff (n.d.) says, "a science necessitating long years of training, experience, and education." This means, I think, that without a refined but far-reaching understanding of social situations, without physical adroitness, without delicate verbal care, without eyes that know exactly when to look and when not to look and what to look at when they are and are not looking, and without a skilled willingness to abide by the conventions, a man who would obey the self-directed social injunction to "be himself" - which he should if the rhetoric of naturalness would be believed - would rage like a bull among the china sensibilities

of whatever emporium of selves he is loosed into, and would be banished eventually from the company of his fellow men, just for his crime of "not knowing how to behave." On the other hand, the human chameleon who is nimble and svelte, who can juggle not only his own but the identities of others too in complex trajectories, while all the time seeming to have polite eyes only for what is shown to him, will be a social asset, feted for his vivacious ease, an artist to his fingertips, whose very presence is the breathtaking physiological trick of seeming to be an absence of all those human phenomena that are "not done", "not mentioned", and "unmentionable". Natural conduct, one must conclude, is the reverse of what it is believed to be, and so this analysis is on the edge of saying that there is nothing natural about natural conduct.

The social construction of naturalness - both as a desirable mode of conduct and as conduct that poses as its own opposite - may well function, as does the myth that real selves are inaccessible, to protect performers from a consciousness that they can only be what they can seem to be, which consciousness would surely make more taxing still the creation of natural selves in interaction, to such an extent that the continuity of social life would be threatened. Maybe this threat of disruption, should people realize that their conduct, when imperfectly natural, signifies that they only have inadequate selves, has to be met by a myth which says the opposite, that selves are somehow traduced by any conduct.

Obviously some people are better at seeming to be natural than others, and this fact leads me to repeat what I have already observed, that, although Goffman is always aware of people as ritual beings, he has never considered the consequences for interaction of variations in acting ability between persons. (He could have done in the essay "Where the Action Is" when he writes about the "character contests" whose outcome is diminished ritual power for the loser and increased ritual power for the winner, but, instead of working the analytic promise of this discovery, he drives only to the conclusion that run-ins are socially disruptive.) One important interactional consequence for the person who is exceptionally good at acting himself, whether as a unique behavioural montage or as a natural self or as a mix of both, is, I now again suggest, that he will by his conduct alone gather ritual power. Thus the more interactants are bent on raising their ritual power - as indeed, obeying the dramatic imperative of everyday life, they must always be - the more interactions, which Goffman has already shown must be viewed as structured on the basis that people are ritual beings, will turn round exclusively ritual concerns. But unfortunately, despite his saying (Goffman, 1975) that often interactions are one-man shows, which perception, I am suggesting, actually demands the ritual frame of analysis, Goffman has only used his idea of persons' sacrality in a negative way as if sacrality is merely an attribute that only must not be offended rather than, as I propose here,

one that not only can be generated and magnified by expert human enactments but should be, a state of affairs that cries out for more of Goffman's ritual sociology.

Now if ritual power even in the seemingly undramaturgical case of natural conduct can be dependent on acting ability, it would follow that there might exist institutions wherein persons can be so trained that their cultivated styles of conduct will come to command more than their fair share of deference. Public schools in England are one such institution, and so successful is the dramatic coaching of their clients - albeit taking place on rugby fields and in dining rooms and under other guises - that these persons can often be described as "well-bred", as if their peculiar behavioural inflexions were so "natural" to them that they must have been inherited. In fact, everywhere in society, persons develop their expertise at acting, and the periods of training are usually called "socialization" periods as though that term can mask their essentially dramaturgical function, this masking being itself a form of deference to the idea that humanness is so worthy - in whatever role it is discovered - as to be something that cannot be bought by fees for instruction in how to act it.

Of course, it is not only individuals who will be natural or unnatural. Interactions as a whole may be experienced as having this or that amount of naturalness, but only by their interactants and not necessarily equally for each of them. One test of a natural interaction might be



the degree of ease with which an interactant can forget himself therein, the greater this is the more natural the interaction. So interactions which feel like interactions would be ipso facto unnatural, and always like this for he who would study them. The active student of interactions moreover must fake sufficient naturalness, which might be an adequate performance of appearing to have forgotten himself, in order to prevent his exclusion from the interactions he would study, and he will never know whether or not his co-interactants are similarly faking. Appearance is all in these matters, and the consciousness accompanying appearances - in the above examples as well as in several other situations my analysis turns up - need not be taken into consideration so long as it does not look like consciousness, which in the case of a natural appearance would transform this anyway into an unnatural one. Obviously, interactions are more likely to be natural when interactants are similarly trained, for then in order to be in harmony with one another they need make less of the effort that would awaken them to the interactional side of interaction. From this it can be inferred that items of behaviour taken on their own are not in themselves natural or unnatural, so that the naturalistic rhetoric which would outlaw unnatural conduct as intrinsically unhuman misses the point that any conduct can be regarded as natural if only it makes sense in a shared interpretive scheme.

Natural conduct, which will always be fashionable conduct, is good conduct because it is the exemplary opposite of what is taken to be least human of all, unnatural behaviour, but conduct in general will be the more moral - or, as is natural conduct, the more ritually effective - the more consummately it is performed, with little regard for the contents of the moral realm created by the performance. So a poor performer is a poor person, not just because he breaks an important rule of the stage - one which is no less important in everyday life - that a person must always give himself to the best of his ability but more significantly because if he does not do this he cannot appear as much of a person. What is more, in appearing as less than himself, a person not only slights himself but also those he interacts with, who are made to feel they are only worthy of his half-hearted self. So it is not surprising that the rule to perform well is entrenched in all forms of social life. From this one might speculate that much of social life is not just about the protection of face, as Goffman has demonstrated, but beyond that, is to do with the ritualization of persons. The principal social activity of persons might just be their individual and mutual attempts to generate sacrality for themselves. Sometimes they may do this with one another's assistance as appreciative audiences, and, at other times, persons may open a ritual gap beneath them by desacralizing others. A central human ambition, then,

might be as simple as the one to be something greater than flesh and blood, to be, for example, an immortal soul which can be won or lost by mortal conduct. Does this mean that good performers are necessarily good people? I think they are taken to be so, provided that their performances neither look like what they are nor are compromised by being too various or too skilled, which again would show them to be more like performances than genuine-seeming selves. An objection might be made here that a brilliant criminal, for example, is bad because he is bad, never mind his brilliance. But I suggest that, if this criminal gets away with his crime and if he sets a fashion whose adherents similarly get away with their crimes, then he will be considered good, and the more so as the fashion catches on. As it is, his badness - which will be the element of his acting that is "not done", such as injuring another person - will be redeemed with moral credit to spare if the crimes have been lucrative and daring and imaginative, which are very much elements of highly competent performance. This has been the case for the Great Train Robbers at any rate.

So possession is always controlled and only sometimes by its being natural conduct, and life is about the ritualization of self (which is almost to say, about the annihilation of the physical). Do people really spend their lives fighting for the limelight? I think they do, but I also think that they are safely boxed into frames and greatly constrained by their dramatic talent, as I now explain.

### Additional Controls of Possession

Natural conduct controls itself as a matter of course to conform slavishly to given rules of conduct but performances require additional controls if they are not to overwhelm interactions. These are supplied by framing devices which range from the physical separation of stages (in the case of ritualized ritual enactments in the theatre) to a continuous framing generated in his paracommunicative channels by the performer as he might, for example, relate a story in a small focused gathering. Safely framed, the performer can create worlds for his audience to enter, and it is to the performer as an envoy from a world that appreciation is shown and not to the performer as human physiology per se. The opposite of appreciation is the rudeness of breaking into a world without warning. Interrupting like this is in its own right a performance, but, unframed by requisite apologising, it discommodes its audience, and powerful sanctions are reserved for interruptions of all kinds, whether these be "contempt of court" in judicial places or "butting into" conversations. In this way social life is not only organized to protect people from performances but also to protect performances from people, so much so that those who repeatedly disrespect performances - such persons as importunate children and lunatics - are regarded as less human than performers. Thus, deliberated performance, as long as it looks reasonably natural or unperformed, despite the fashionable counter-rhetoric, is regarded as more human than undisciplined

or free expression, and it is controlled or disciplined by its frames as soon as it appears.

As well as being controlled by its frame, performance is more comprehensively controlled by a person's dramatic ability. Throughout society this fact is recognized by the lengthy socialization periods individuals must undergo before they can feel at ease in new roles. Socialization, and indeed professionalization, is a rehearsal period, and even professional actors need a great deal of rehearsal time before they can feel comfortable in a new part. Actors who perform inadequately can destroy a playworld, of course, but other role-players in society may wobble institutions if they forget important lines, miss cues, or simply seem miscast. It would only take, for example, one nurse going about in a filthy dress for a whole hospital and a calling to be brought into disrepute. (At first sight this seems unreasonable, because only one nurse is behaving "badly", but, if my point, that she is mostly an envoy from a ritual realm all other nurses also come from, is granted, it becomes obvious that a nurse who looks like a dirty slut is enough to make those around her, including her fellow nurses, see the possibility of similar transmogrifications in any nurse anywhere, just because something very evidently has gone wrong in the ritual realm of "nurseness".) One can appreciate from the hard work it is even for professional actors to learn new parts that, as it is generally true that societal roles must be learnt in the same way as stage parts,

they are not easy to assume, and this is perhaps yet another reason why persons tend to only play one self. Control, then, is also exercised by the difficulty there is in mastering any performance, and this difficulty is partly a function of dramatic ability.

Unlike other persons, however, the professional actor needs to develop an unusual degree of behavioural self-consciousness. This, on top of the arduous and unique working conditions of his profession, separates the actor from the very people he must impersonate on stage. Yet, on stage or television, the more successfully the actor acts the more he succeeds in hiding from audiences what he very definitely is, an actor. This is an unexpected form of control of possession, that well-controlled possession always controls disclosure of the possible source of control, and it explains why persons in interaction, seeming to be in depth what I say they can only be on the surface, must initially seem resistant to the analysis I am advancing. So expressions form and reform on the face, the body moves, the hands, arms, head, and trunk gesture and indicate, eyes glance, a vibrating column of air becomes a voice, and the whole is suddenly something unproblematic. But, when people are understood to be variously caught up in behaviourally cueing their audiences as to what they wish to be taken for, their conduct can be seen as a dance and a prayer, as antics and invocations seeking to create beings called persons, for whom a body and a mind are the bare minimum constituent

parts that in consort must devote themselves to their transformation into a person who is only a person when it becomes unthinkable that he need not be what and who he is in his present condition, when his ritual appearance fully controls into invisibility its appearance of being mere appearance.

In this "Summary and Conclusions" I have already used the concept "ritual realm" on several occasions. Now I shall come at it more directly through the following condensed remarks about "rounding", which is the term David Cole (1975) uses to describe how an actor creates presence by seeming to come from an "illud tempus" or land of spirits and dreams.

#### Ritual Power Absorbs People rather than Impresses Them

A controlled performance, I argue, is not a feat of conduct standing in interactional lieu of some other more real person, rather it is the person in toto, so that a tightly controlled person, for example, shows not that he is securely guarded but only his limited scope and stiff syntax. Thus, totally uncontrolled people are not people at all whereas people whose control excels - not by being tight but by being expert - can bring about the interactional phenomenon of "rounding", that is, of becoming present by flooding an interaction with a supernatural realm fellow interactants hunger to see more of in his person. A person who rounds, very much more so than one who fails to do so,

creates, as it were, a human "black hole" into which an audience can disappear. Therefore it is misleading to say that interactionally powerful individuals "project" strong "impressions" of themselves. Much more accurately, one should say that brilliant performers open up larger worlds for other people to enter.

Among actors on stage, rounding can call forth rounding, and, when this happens, the staged conduct, in looking larger than life, looks fully alive. In everyday life, roundings may be uncommon but the entertainment ethic that dominates Anglo-American culture (Althiede & Snow, 1979) compels the presentation of events as dramatic conflicts, and the more these resemble (or become) actual roundings the more involving they must be for audiences. So it could be that a form of social life which was entirely lacking in occasions of rounding would never fully involve its members, seeming to them an arena wherein they are less than fully alive. And it would follow from this that the goal of quietly harmonious relations - within an organisation, for example - would entail, if achieved, a fall-off of members' interest, niceness having been bought at the cost of humanness.

On stage, however, where rounding is sought, not only by actors but, because they are watching, by the audience too, the ordeal an actor goes through, if he cannot properly control his possession, or the triumph he enjoys, if he does round, comes to an end with his curtain call, but in everyday



life (if its interactions are lived, that is) the ordeals whose overcoming can give rise to triumph are never finalized. An actor, furthermore, is judged the better actor the more easily he dispossesses himself after a performance, whereas other people, if they suddenly stop being the selves they had seemed to be, are for that seen as less than, not more than, any one of those selves. So continuity is one of the main differences between stage life and everyday life, and perhaps this is the stress against which people mythologize a real self that could only be itself by not performing. Unfortunately, only the sleeping self meets this criterion and though, as they say, it may be, in having "all its defences down," the realest of selves, it is of course a self that communicates no self, being no more absorbent of interest than the flesh constituting it.

Known ritual realms, moreover, I am implying, lose their ritualness by being known. I now give a possible reason for this, and some consequences arising from this reason.

#### Ritual Power as the Originality that Escapes Theory

Only its originality warrants that conduct is meant for its present audience, and, where a sleeping self, for example, is at the extreme of unoriginality, a thoroughly original self is the most alive kind of self. Thus, social

life, which is lifelike to the degree that it seems, without loss of interpretability, spontaneous, unpredictable, and original, is not necessarily best analysed under the auspices of determinism, when it must be assumed that all conduct can be predicted, for original conduct like future knowledge (Popper, 1957) cannot be known in advance. In other words, because life at its liveliest tends to transcend itself in unexpected ways, any complete analysis must take care to seem incomplete. (A sociological realm, therefore, diminishes itself as it reduces the ritual realm to nothing.)

A person's pursuit of originality, I contend, is no more than his attempt to acquire ritual power in order to be a serious person who is taken seriously. However, truly charismatic individuals who unfailingly transport fellow interactants to transcendent realms are few and far between. But that does not mean that their opposites are not usually looked down on as "automatic" humans, too obviously taken over by possessions unworthy of human life. Stage actors falling into automatism are considered to have sold themselves, when, says Grotowski, they cannot bring about a real theatrical communion. It is this sort of "sold" bad acting, with its stereotyped movements and its parroted lines, that has given acting a bad name and helped to obscure the reality that when all conduct is acting the more human person is the better actor of himself.

As social life becomes ever more differentiated and

therefore more dishonest (Luhmann, 1979), so ritual power will accrue not just to original acts but also to any human truth, since this alone can cue its interpreters to a realm that does not destroy itself the instant it is imagined, as a lie must (its realm necessarily negating itself). It might be that it is societally convenient to frame such truth in theatres, there to institutionally preserve refreshing evidence that selves can be awesome. Conversely, when social selves are expected to be hyper-aware of the moral meanings of their conduct, as in Cromwell's England, theatres might appear to be untactful insinuations that the reverse is the case, and so be closed, as they were by Cromwell.

But ritual presence, always having to find new forms for itself, can quickly become automatic, whether in theatres or in life. Grotowski (1976) says that the only way an actor can avoid this "death in life" is by giving himself to others with love, and Abrahams (1972), of street performers in American ghettos, also says that the sharing of possession is an act of love. I think that what is meant by this is that presence must be realized for the audience of the moment, since, if it seems like something that has been manufactured for others, it also seems not to care especially for the present audience. If this is so, then loving someone is the constant recreation for the person in question of a self that is to be entered only by this person or by this person ahead of all others. When this is mutual in everyday life, universes will open for each other, but love that uses hackneyed speech and worn-out signs has the

problem of appearing to be other than it is, as does any conduct not bearing an individual signature. So perhaps the desire to come across to other people as really-meaning-something-quite-genuinely is the greatest spur there is to creative expression, and perhaps talking to other people is the only chance for most people of receiving proofs that they can be listened to as people. The imperative here is to be a human being who can hold up his head in the eyes of others even if he cannot get others to bow their heads before him. Human beings must want to "walk tall" in this way because they want to be people, and they must want to be people because they are not, and they are not people because at every moment of every interaction they must begin again to be original with no guarantee that this is possible. Becoming a person, therefore, is an endless social construction process whose completion is ever in the future, in life and in analyses of life.

But people do manage to be people and sometimes they bring themselves off with such virtuosity that, when they exit their own performances, something - an aura? - lingers like a disembodied ritual power. From the springboard of this thought I now leap to the further thought that people know enough about ritual power to arrange life around it.

#### Ritual Power Shapes Places, Audiences, and Occasions

Ritual realms may be entered when the person or persons who created them are absent, and this is true not only of

performances coded in words, music, or images, but also of territories of persons, which I term ritual spaces because I believe they are sacrosanct insofar as they are invested with ritual power belonging originally to people. So territory is less a chunk of demarcated real estate than it is ritual space, an other-worldly piece of the world, though of course the other world is not any sort of territory. This must be why churches, art galleries, and the like, containing as they do imagery that functions as the interface between the so-called real world and other ritual worlds, are treated of themselves with respect. Places that are treated with disrespect, on the other hand, by vandals for example, are likewise ritual spaces, but ones whose putative ritual owners are targets for contaminations designed to show the owners that their power is being challenged. (Citizens who urge stiff punishment for vandals, tit for tat degradation, as it were, reveal that they are highly receptive to this meaning of "mindless" spoliations.) Persons themselves, moreover, are necessarily self-propelled units of ritual space, and it is consistent with this conceptualization that they are respected not because, having two arms, two legs, a head, and a torso, they look like human beings but because humans look like beings who can open up realities that are more absorbing than the visible one.

But these ritual realities only occasionally reach the pitch of being completely absorbing and, when they do, it is because a person bringing them to life has "rounded". By

rounding, an actor unleashes ritual danger and this common danger transforms a collection of individuals into the collective of an audience.<sup>4</sup> Without the audience's appreciation of his danger a performer could not round. He needs to feel that all eyes are locked on him before he can go on to create from his slightest acts realities that transcend the mundane, and only when a performer feels he is fully there for others can he begin to assume a character with which the audience can identify until in a sense it too becomes the character. Generally speaking, then, the audience fuels a performer's ritual power to the degree that he succeeds in awakening them to it. Thus a given frame can go on filling with ritual power through a feedback process, and this power might not vanish with the vanishing frame. This being so, gatherings may owe their shape to the ebb and flow of ritual power rather than to the rules of gatherings per se, and these rules in turn might exist mainly to help in the generation or preservation of ritual power.

It should be noted at this point that ritual power may not only gravitate to space but also to its other kinds of frames, so that the frames of occasions can come to possess independent ritual power. For example, the routines of theatres are deferred to in their own right, because they have borrowed presence from the productions they have framed.

Obviously, formal rituals can be full of ritual presence while empty rituals are precisely those from which it has

gone, and, given the behavioural imperative to be fashionable, it would seem that ritual life will drift from the unfashionable rituals of life so that "proper" forms of conduct will tend always to lag behind contemporary experiences of ritual presence. So empty rituals will be encountered more often than full ones, and ritual life will seem to be the less definitely framed the more it is ritually alive.

It might also come about that a person whose ritual power is strongly associated with a certain heavily-ritualized frame will find it hard to maintain his power outside it. This is definitely true, as has been pointed out, of actors, who on stage can achieve ritual power quite beyond that of members of the audience and yet who are treated as lightweight persons off-stage. (It even happens that actors at the beginning of their performances may take from places and frames a power that was put into these by other actors.) In a sense, then, actors who are not acting on stage are dispossessed, as must be anybody who lacks the ability or opportunity to conjure gestures and words into an interpretable self. A person who cannot stage himself in interaction - so far as this analysis goes - cannot be a person. His dispossession is ritual death, some examples of which I now consider before briefly recapitulating my thoughts on "rapture", which is only not ritual death because the enraptured person is taken into another possession, whereas people who ritually die must enter into possessions that do not want them to be the people they either were or

would wish to be.

### Ritual Death

A person dies ritually when his habitual possession is destroyed by hostile forces outside his own control.

Thus:

A young woman is walking down a city street. . . . She walks through a group of construction workers who are eating lunch in a line along the pavement. Her stomach tightens with terror and revulsion; her face becomes contorted into a grimace of self-control and fake unawareness; her walk and carriage become stiff and dehumanized. No matter what they say to her, it will be unbearable. . . . They will use her body with their eyes. They will evaluate her market price. They will comment on her defects, or compare them to those of other passers-by. They will make her a participant in their fantasies without asking if she is willing. They will make her feel ridiculous, or grotesquely sexual, or hideously ugly. Above all, they will make her feel like a thing.

(Tax, 1972)

Here the young woman's ritual being cannot survive an interactional atmosphere of pure biological appraisal, and yet (unlike some women) she cannot welcome the only possession available to her, of her own body. As a person, she dies, and what walks on past the construction workers is her body in which, desperately, amidst the death throes of the old possession, some new possession - such as the experience in its written form - is being born.

The ritual death of the young woman is possibly not visible, but it could have been, as it is in the case of this suspect when he realises he is not going to get away with murder:



"I guess you know why we're here."

Hickock's mouth straightened - his posture, too.

"I guess you realize we wouldn't have come all the way to Nevada just to chat with a couple of two-bit cheque chisellers."

Nye had closed the notebook. He, too, stared at the prisoner, and observed that a cluster of veins had appeared in his left temple.

"Would we, Dick?"

"What?"

"Come this far to talk about a bunch of cheques."

"I can't think of any other reason."

Nye drew a dagger on the cover of his notebook. While doing so, he said, "Tell me, Dick. Have you ever heard of the Clutter murder case?" Whereupon, he later wrote in a formal report of the interview, "Suspect underwent an intense visible reaction. He turned grey. His eyes twitched."

(Capote, 1966)

Now that his secret murdering self is public, Hickock's "innocent" public self, turned into a ritually empty session, cannot survive and visibly dies. Exactly the same sort of death is narrated in finer detail by the hero, also a murderer, of Norman Mailer's (1967) An American Dream:

I did not have any certainty at all that I could go on. No, they would question me and question me; they would tell me truths and they would tell me lies; they would be friendly, they would be unfriendly; and all the while I would keep breathing the air of this room with its cigarettes and cigars, its coffee which tasted of dirty urns, its distant hint of lavatories and laundries, of junk yards and morgues, I would see dark green walls and dirty white ceilings, I would listen to subterranean mutterings, I would open my eyes and close them under the blistering light of the electric bulbs, I would live in a subway, I would live for ten or twenty years in a subway, I would lie in a cell at night with nothing to do but walk a stone square floor. I would die through endless stupors and expired plans.

Or I would spend a year of appeals, spend a last year of my life in an iron cage and walk one morning into a room where ready for nothing, where nothing done, failed, miserable, frightened of what migrations were ready for me, I would go out smashing, jolting, screaming inside,

out into the long vertigo of death which fell down endless stone walls.

It was then I came very close. I think I would have called Leznicki over and asked him for the name of a lawyer, and stuck my tongue out in some burlesque of him and me and our new contract, and rolled my eyes, and said, "You see, Leznicki, I'm raving mad." I think I really would have done it then, but I did not feel the strength to call across the room, I had a horror of appearing feeble before that young blonde girl, and so I sat back and waited for Leznicki to return, experiencing what it was like to know the exhaustion and the apathy of those who are very old and very ill.

(Mailer, 1967)

But Rojack is not fully dispossessed, because his old possession, which is the narrator's too, is, feebly, holding itself together. However, ritual death might be experienced as an instantaneous shock. In the next example a young man suddenly senses his imminent exposure as a homosexual, which would divest him of the only possession he has:

At this instant something inside of me was torn in two with brutal force. It was as though a thunderbolt had fallen and cleaved asunder a living tree. I heard the structure, which I had been building up piece by piece with all my might up to now, collapse miserably to the ground. I felt as though I had witnessed the instant in which my existence had been turned into some sort of fearful nonbeing.

(Mishima, 1965)

An instantaneous ritual death may entail the destruction, along with that of the possession itself, of the whole world in which the possession had lived:

All men who have experienced prison know that its terrible grasp reaches out far beyond its physical walls. There is a moment when those whose lives it

will crush suddenly grasp, with awful clarity, that all reality, all present time, all activity - everything real in their lives - is fading away, while before them opens a new road on to which they tread with the trembling step of fear. That icy moment is the moment of arrest.

(Serge, 1972)

Solzhenitsyn describes the same experience:

Arrest! Need it be said that it is a breaking point in your life, a bolt of lightning which has scored a direct hit on you? That it is an unassimilable spiritual earthquake not every person can cope with, as a result of which people often slip into insanity?

The Universe has as many different centres as there are living beings in it. Each of us is a centre of the Universe, and that Universe is shattered when they hiss at you: "You are under arrest."

If you are arrested, can anything else remain unshattered by this cataclysm?

But the darkened mind is incapable of embracing these displacements in our universe, and both the most sophisticated and the veriest simpleton among us, drawing on all life's experience, can gasp out only: "Me? What for?"

And this is a question which, though repeated millions and millions of times before, has yet to receive an answer.

Arrest is an instantaneous, shattering thrust, expulsion, somersault from one state to another.

....

That's what arrest is: it's a blinding flash and a blow which shifts the present instantly into the past and the impossible into omnipotent actuality.

(Solzhenitsyn, 1974)

In all these cases the self is annihilated while the body and a disoriented, possession-less consciousness live on. These forcibly dispossessed beings will have to learn new parts on stages not of their choosing, with nothing in their pasts to act as guides. Deaths like these are more profound than physical deaths because it is the person who

dies, whereas, when the body dies, its possession, though obviously terminated, may not have been affected.

Who else but professional actors would know more than most about these involuntary dispossessions? There are few actors who cannot graphically describe what they call "dying" on stage, which happens, they say, when the performance fails in the eyes of the audience. Such "dyings" occur in everyday life too, as when spouses kill trusting partners by telling them they do not love them any more, or bosses faithful retainers by firing them, and so on. But in every interaction each person is no more than a word or a gesture or a glance away from his ritual death, though the further he thinks he is from it the more of a death it would be were he to suffer it.

However, much more often than a person dies in interaction, he leaves himself behind and freely enters another's possession, which to some extent enraptures him. Now follows a short exposition of my provisional ideas on rapture, which, with its negative, shame (a partial ritual death), is the corollary of possession in interaction, if interaction is fully interactive.

### Rapture

Possessions of full ritual power can be effortlessly entered by a willing audience who then inhabit the same ritual realm as the possessed persons and, in so doing, become

enraptured through their release from their own possessions into realms not the least of whose enrapturing properties is that of seeming to be at once familiar in being strange and strange in being familiar.

Rapture in a mild form is interest, and interest in its turn can only be felt if its object makes sense, but making sense is not a guarantee of being interesting any more than being interesting guarantees rapture. So, just as the opposite of possession is dispossession, the opposite of rapture is disinterest, with the median state, interest, obviously being experienced more often than rapture. But everyday interactions are fully interactive only if one person at least is enraptured by some other possession; usually, however, interactants, each of them, oscillate, either between rapture and possession, or between interest and being interesting, or, if the interaction is minimally interactive, between seeing sense and making it.

The "rounding" which takes place when the ritual power of possession in interaction is at its height is not, between two persons, possession contra possession, but this with intervening rapture on both sides. The relationship between rounding persons is, of course, the most interactive there is, with every word, tone, expression, gesture, and appearance (of any sort) making sense that seems absolutely original and perfectly true at the same time. (Hollywood has chosen the gun-fight for the archetypal representation

of the rounding encounter, but this degrades the ritual powers of rounding by involving physical death in the outcome of ritual murder.) All interactions must fall short of this "ideal type", the rounding interaction, which is perhaps found most often between lovers, where it is least accessible for direct sociological observation.

Because rapture must dissolve social distance it endangers formal status differences, which are therefore least likely to be found in charismatic groups where the leader enraptures his followers (and, conversely, when everybody hates the "system", the formality of ranks and duties will be the only resort for ritually unimpressive persons, as is the case in prisons, armies, hospitals, and some university departments, for example). But, politically, rapture need not necessarily be felt just for a human leader; it is my contention that bureaucracies themselves are charismatic organizations functioning most rationally when bureaucrats are enraptured by the idea of rational offices and procedures. Those political leaders, however, who set out to enrapture whole societies are obliged to use terror, when they fail, in order to command for their shows of possession suitably reciprocal shows of rapture that obviously must be in excess of the respect that could be evinced with fear in preference to terror. (Nations without political prisoners, one may say then, are likely to be fairly uninvolving per se to rulers and citizens both.) The charismatization of political leaders (Sennett, 1977), even long after Weber and others

have predicted their decline, may be accounted for by rapture: the socially secessionist enrapturing possibility one lover may hold out for another is intercepted by the friendly political face on the TV screen, so that the very state that would take persons in pairs out of society is used in an attempt to take the whole of society out of its constituent pairs. Those political leaders, whether societal or organizational, who actively compete in this way with husbands and wives for husbands and wives, work their images as the "stars" of entertainment do, but no longer framed in the safety frames of "entertainment" or "high culture".

Rapture, then, is a social state that may be seen as pivotal to any understanding of societal processes, but, of course, for that very reason, it is a central experience of the individual. Thus, persons capable of the enrapturing possessions that make them more like people than people, seem very used to becoming enraptured, and it seems to be a condition of any possession that it be preceded by rapture, the new possession, if radically redefining and improving on the old, coming as a catharsis. What is more, people who have the talent and willingness to lose and find themselves in a variety of relationships with external human or other material would seem able to enrapture themselves with themselves. And auto-rapture such as this enables shame, which is rapture at the self turned into its negative, by an emerging self's consciousness that the old self or possession was ritually unworthy; and since shame is a social state - because it leads persons

to try to live down or sheer off their shameful possessions and to cultivate those of their possessions that have enrapturing possibilities - it facilitates personal growth. (It is also the case that, when rapture for another person has existed, shame at his disgraces will be keenly felt, and this supports my view that not only in interactions, when these are truly interactive, are the boundaries of selves wrongly represented if persons are seen as their physical beings - insofar as these are not the cues for ritual meanings - but also in some more prolonged social relationships like marriage, in which it is less helpful to think of the pairing as an interacting dyad than to think of both individuals as being separate, complementary representatives of an essential unity.)

Rapture, of course, may be thwarted, perhaps more often than not, and the consequence for an individual is that he will feel hate when his ritual development through rapture is blocked, and he will feel it for the person or situation or thing that is in his way. Bettelheim (1970), however, reports that in the German concentration camps many of the longest surviving prisoners identified with the SS guards, even wearing home-made jackboots in pathetic emulation. This indicates that, when hate for oppressors cannot translate into action or of itself clear them out of the way, it may yield to its opposite, so imperious is the human dramaturgical spirit which will be a person. But, outside concentration camps and prisons of all sorts, hate can be suspended by ritual routings into entertainment and culture; these offer short cuts



for their audiences to the state of personness, when people are released from themselves so as to come into their own as truly human beings, whose essential nature may be that it is always beyond itself, drawing itself into itself.

Of course, in this rhetoric, hate or release or any feeling is not something a person just feels. A feeling happens when a person experiences himself as a person behaving in a way that it has been culturally established designates certain ritual states.<sup>5</sup> Thus a person is "moved" only when he has a defining consciousness that he is being moved, otherwise he is simply taken in. Likewise he is shamed only when he sees the socially degrading state that is his is degrading, else, however shameful he may be to others, he can feel no shame, only the cultural epiphenomena in their unprocessed state as it were, before culture has redesigned them into signs and symbols. That feelings may be very painful or ecstatic, and everything in between, only shows the tremendous capacity for identification persons do have for other people. (Naturally I do not include here the feelings that are sensations or pre-social biological experiences.)

This is definitely not to say that feelings are not deeply felt or that they are understood only through unfeeling understandings, and it is not to imply that if somehow feelings could be blown away from people's minds then people would be better able to be people. On the contrary, my view is that, for example, societal analyses operating with purely cognitive understandings of persons risk concluding that people are

stupid, for this is an inevitable result of looking at people as if their ways of being conscious of one another are not those of empathy and identification. Now, since people who would empathize cannot be cognitive without ritually offending those about whom they are thinking in this mode, it is in fact stupid to aspire to a style of apprehension that carries on as if it were not human. Fruits of this sort of socially clumsy, cognitive understanding, furthermore, will only become incorporated in human life if there are persons who can in their turn be enraptured by the cognitive, and be so enraptured that they still cannot see that this is what they are (for if they did they would feel shame at having been enraptured).

Cognition, however, is in no way threatened by its use of rapture as a means of apprehension, because rapture is respect heightened to an inordinate pitch, and respect is the leaving alone of phenomena. Moreover, rapturous apprehension is only possible when it intimately relates the known to the unknown, whereas free-floating cognition when it is not of itself enrapturing may have very little human content. (It need hardly be said at this point that the anti-dramatic short circuits of experiential-style research workshops can only work when they stop being what they think they are.)

It should be clear by now that, throughout this very brief resume of my remarks on rapture (Chapter IX), I have assumed that a person cannot become enraptured by phenomena that are not interpretable to him. Interpretability is the conceptual link between the apparently subjective state of

rapture and the society-wide appearances of fashion. The nature of this link has not been examined in this thesis much beyond the point of saying that a minimum necessary condition for enrapturing possession is interpretability. But it is implicit in several passages that a close appreciation of originality in conduct, which is the sine qua non of ritually powerful forms, depends on a fine understanding of conduct fashions, for only he who is thoroughly conversant with already established forms will be able to confidently declare for true originality when he sees it. True originality consists in being beyond what has gone before while being perfectly comprehensible (and if the new comprehensibility is larger than the old it could be said that a civilization is becoming more intelligent). Such originality is perhaps impossible for most people most of their time, and this is precisely a reason for fashion, that it gives its followers a momentary advantage over those who lag behind its original forms, for the fashion follower can be highly original and also, just because he is in fashion, quite comprehensible in wide societal terms. Here is a return to my proposition that fashionable conduct is ritually strong conduct and that ritual conduct is good conduct. So it might now be said - to make one more connection between fashion and rapture - that those who are "interested" in fashion, although they may not know it, are interested in being alive with other persons. The tragedy of these people is beautifully stated by George Eliot (1957)

apropos of the young Gwendolen Harleth:

She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes. Here is a restraint which nature and society have provided on the pursuit of striking adventure; so that a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel, is nevertheless held captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms and does nothing particular.

Both punks and nurses, I have said, live for their ritual power (or enrapturing capabilities, according to whether those who see them would enter a realm defiant of normal society or one risen above it), and, because of this, also have ritual power to diminish or offend those who only see it as a self-serving insistence on empty ritual power that, however, by pushing down the audience, can still maintain the same differential between those seen and those seeing. But no punk and no nurse, insofar as he or she comes to perfectly exemplify the punk or the nurse, which is the whole point of being either, is a separate, unique possession. These fashioned beings, just as they do not succeed in coming across as independently embodied persons, must look "taken over", like dummies or zombies. Cleverly, both groups adopt just such routinized conduct that looks as though it were not alive (in the sense of being a conscious separation from the social universe), and this zombifying of conduct - in the case of

punks done by deliberately adopting moronic conduct appearances and in the case of the nurses by the ruthless extirpation of the personal in pursuit of utter selflessness - is too much. Confronted with it, audiences give in, because it is not natural, and therefore evidently is a product of human will. So the will reveals itself, and at this meta level the dummy is humanized again, now being the more powerful the less personal he or she is. Soldiers, policemen, and all office holders, inasmuch as they totally sink themselves into their offices, in this way acquire the ritual power that, it can now be said, will always accrue to immolations of the self on the emptiness of roles, in exactly the same way that ritual power accrues to immolations of the role on the emptiness of selves. Yet, as George Eliot observes, this is "nothing particular". It is simply conduct that looks towards its own time as a time to be preserved against every possible force of change, and its originality is nothing but its willed unoriginality. Persons so possessed by it abrogate their particular possibilities, but, and this is the crux, only to a greater extent than all persons who allow themselves to be possessed. In any age and culture there simply may not be many viable possessions, and the sense of there being a variety between persons may only come from their individually different ways of failing to be properly possessed, and the failures will seem the same as the rare cases of genuinely original possession to those who themselves, knowing it or not, are improperly possessed. The dummies and the would-be dummies,

then, whether they veneer themselves in acceptability or try to tear themselves to shreds, are out there, right now, a jostling throng, the human race, through which, who knows, may be shouldering someone who can see himself, and his others too, for what they are, and in a way that lets them see it. Saying this, I, myself, feel like one of the dummies, through whose mouth some ventriloquist who has no respect for me is articulating these words and sentences. But this social feeling, that the world is an ant heap and that being an ant is to move and speak at another's bidding, of course, can be escaped, if, and only if, rapture should supervene.

### Conclusion

People, so-called, know themselves in one another's company when possessions spiral into being and travel to and fro between them, and sometimes separate possessions may become one larger possession into which fingers, hands, words, eyes, laughter, expressions, gestures, exclamations, faces, voices, and bodies too are drawn pell-mell. These mini-zeitgeists that only obey their own dynamic may also feed the societal zeitgeist which sucks into itself the larger human material of lives entire, careers, businesses, artistic movements, money, and ideas until eventually blowing itself out and dropping the airborne harbingers of the future

to the ground as period pieces and relics. Strindberg (1964), who, in my opinion, is still airborne, understood this very well in 1888, when writing of the characters in his play

Miss Julie:

Since they are modern characters, living in an age of transition more urgently hysterical at any rate than the age which preceded it, I have drawn my people as split and vacillating, a mixture of the old and the new. And I think it not improbable that modern ideas may, through the media of newspapers and conversation, have seeped down into the social stratum which exists below stairs.

My souls (or characters) are agglomerations of past and present cultures, scraps from books and newspapers, fragments of humanity, torn shreds of once-fine clothing that has become rags, in just the way that a human soul is patched together.

Individuals may only occasionally be aware of themselves like this, and perhaps less frequently still are they fully alive in interactions, as Normal Mailer (1970), about to be arrested outside the Pentagon on 20 October 1967, describes the condition:

It was as if the air had changed, or light had altered; he felt immediately much more alive - yes, bathed in air - and yet disembodied from himself, as if indeed he were watching himself in a film where this action was taking place. He could feel the eyes of the people behind the rope watching him, could feel the intensity of their existence as spectators. And as he walked forward, he and the MP looked at one another with the naked stricken lucidity which comes when absolute strangers are for the moment absolutely locked together.

This interactional state is captured by Raymond Chandler (1971):

The coffee-maker was almost ready to bubble. I turned the flame low and watched the water rise. It hung a

little at the bottom of the glass tube. I turned the flame up just enough to get it over the hump and then turned it low again quickly. I stirred the coffee and covered it. I set my timer for three minutes. Very methodical guy, Marlowe. Nothing must interfere with his coffee technique. Not even a gun in the hand of a desperate character.

I poured him another slug. "Just sit there," I said. "Don't say a word. Just sit."

He handled the second slug with one hand. I did a fast wash-up in the bathroom and the bell of the timer went just as I got back. I cut the flame and set the coffee-maker on a straw mat on the table. Why do I go into such detail? Because the charged atmosphere made every little thing stand out as a performance, a movement distinct and vastly important. It was one of those hypersensitive moments when all your automatic movements, however long established, however habitual, become separate acts of will. You are like a man learning to walk after polio. You take nothing for granted, absolutely nothing at all.

Mailer and Marlowe, as fully as can be, actors of themselves, are, I contend, at the limit of self-possession, when being a person is totally a matter of acting in a distinctive, intelligible manner that, the sharper it is and the more of a style it is with prevailing fashions, will acquire ritual power, commanding attention, then, of itself for itself alone. This is the condition that all other impersonations of the self in interaction fall short of to various extents, and normally, of course, a person is less likely to become the centre of attention by consummate acting than by "making a scene".

But social life, it will be objected, is about real political situations, in which performances are powerless against economic and similar factors. This is probably so, except that these "real" factors do not exist for most people unless dramatized. For example, Jean-Luc Godard (1972)



reflects on how to make a film about concentration camps, and desperately concludes that their reality is unintelligible unless conveyed obliquely through the reality of those to whom pain and death are administratively irrelevant:

Take concentration camps, for instance. The only real film to be made about them - which has never been made because it would be intolerable - would be if a camp were filmed from the point of view of the torturers and their daily routine. How to get a human body measuring two metres into a coffin measuring fifty centimetres? How to load ten tons of arms and legs on to a three-ton lorry? How to burn a hundred women with petrol enough for ten? One would also have secretaries making lists of everything on their typewriters. The really horrible thing about such scenes would not be their horror but their very ordinary everydayness.

Here the problem is laid bare, of how to make an audience see a "real" factor, like anti-semitism and genocide, in ways that do not dissipate into statistics, thereby dehumanizing the ritual sense of what it is to be human. Goerge Steiner, confronting the same issue, has concluded that tragedy itself is no longer possible against the scale of human exterminations in this century, but if this is so then humans will have stopped being ritual beings, which I do not think is everywhere the case, though I feel that the only contemporary tragedy is the political triviality of human tragedies.

Already, from within "high culture", literary works are being de-ritualized, notably by the French structuralists who refuse to see anything but words in a text. This only mirrors the wider social science practice of behaviourizing

man by collapsing his ritual realm into the literal dimension of his conduct. I see both these approaches as being untrue to people's experience: that how they act, no more than the two-dimensional representation of perspective in a painting, is not to be fully understood in terms that do not, as in the analogy of the painting, show a third dimension or ritual realm as I have called it.

Can I prove this? Only if the words with which I have indicated the ritual realm have seemed to open up a space that at the same time is not a space so much as a frame in which human acts can begin to be properly analysed as having such attributes as dignity, vileness, goodness, beauty, clumsiness, and so on, through the manner of their being acted.

I have declared "inner men" to be fabrications or at best misleading descriptors of possessions that are private, and I suggest that these non-sociological entities are mythologized into the culture so that society may be kept stable. In the situation where people's faces can so easily be blown this way or that in this or that ritual wind, life is brought under control when these faces are nailed to a variety of grinning skulls such as "IQ", "extraversion-introversion rating", "neuroticism score", "construct set", and so on.

Of course, already, many distinguished scientific careers (Birdwhistell, Garfinkel, Schefflen) have been poured into the proposition that a person is only his seeable self,

but not even Goffman has seemed to want to make a case for the human capacity to enrich and refine performative conduct, especially by its sensitive responses to other performances, and so these scientists miss perhaps a central social fact, that, if ritual power can be acquired in interaction by conduct alone, every other theory, of how power (of this sort) is acquired by a levelling down of one set of parties in order to elevate another, is riddled with as many holes as there are ritually powerful performances in the interactions it would pretend to explain. Of course, it is always easier to short-cut performance demands by politically consolidating a ritually powerful enactment with rules backed by force, and those who confront such political terror tactics - whether in their families or in the organizations where they work - may re-route thwarted appreciation (of "betters" who do not live up to their statuses) into figures from the realms of entertainment and high culture. Thus there arises a parallel society, more real, if reality be measured by engrossableness, than the one of cash and labour and gun, which, of late, Althiede & Snow (1979) have demonstrated, more and more models itself on this flimsier but ritually more powerful world.

My thesis has been a provisional affair, since it wished to begin five inseparable large projects rather than conclude a small one. These projects are:

- (1) The integration of a branch of interactional sociology with some society-wide conceptualizations.
- (2) A re-orientation of a style of interactional sociology so that the life of everyday life becomes its central reference.
- (3) The linking of an interaction theory to a wider theory of human comprehension (this in embryo is the rapture-possession relation).
- (4) The development of a sociology whose methodology and practice are of a piece with its findings.
- (5) To advance a theme of the thought of the only genius (known to me, at any rate) currently writing sociology.

My judgement of this thesis is that I have indeed opened up each one of these projects as sociologically viable activities, and my reason for not having been clearer or more comprehensive than I have been is that the amount of work required to push any one of these projects to a conclusion that would draw mainstream scientific respect is obviously enormous.

## Notes

- 1 Some of the conclusions are developed as the summary goes along.
- 2 I refer to punks in the present tense even though their fashion is now outmoded.
- 3 An Oakland Chapter Hell's Angel quoted in Thompson (1968).
- 4 Audiences may be a sociological category between groups and mobs, but, though most persons belong to them more frequently than they belong to groups or mobs, the category has not been well developed in sociology. A view of society as a collection of overlapping audiences has the merit of directing attention to what is most attended to by social people.
- 5 Schefflen (1973a) says that an emotional response "is merely cognitive experience for which the idea is not conscious" and that the unconscious is behaviour "not countenanced in traditional explicit metasystems."

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## Appendix

My theory, speculative and barely theoretical though it may be, predicts a trend in sociology toward more literary work, because literature is a dramatic ritual realm that meets both social life and language in full face, so to speak, generally avoiding outlooks, on the one hand, that take language to be a mathetic code for things called facts and, on the other hand, that assume life to be best approached by the mind in its lowest gear, steering straight ahead, and throttled back to a purely measuring, quantitatively analytic mode. Once the premature scientism of sociology (and perhaps psychology too) is seen for what it is, perhaps a new genre of sociology-literature will replace it, blending ethnographies and speculative analysis as good journalism, in a halting way, already does. The imagination may then be used to take the reader closer to the realities of life and not - as has happened in most of literature since the novel ceased being a popular verbal entertainment - further away as if it itself were a greater realm than society. Thus this appendix - "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" - is a short text written to show how a series of experiences lived on the level of cunning, physical performance awakens a protagonist to their ritual meanings. From a sociological point of view, the text feels incomplete, because everything is implicit. But from the point of view of the text, of course, sociology seems incomplete, because nothing there is implicit.

## Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

His pencil beam played over the statuette without sticking to the gold that, touched by light, seemed warm and reptilian and alive with a contempt for the man behind the beam. He switched his torch off and darkness, dissolving away his surface, exposed his tree of nerves to the seething, hyperactive silence, but, from this fear-infested non-being, his hand and arm, a trembling branch of nerves, reached out. The hand took the statuette and put it as gently as if it were a grenade into his pocket, then, not sensible that it had stolen what had been coveted, waited there while he, still rooted to the spot, braced himself against arresting hands that did not seize him this time.

He padded across the carpet to the door at which, appalled by the loudness of his footfalls following him, he paused, but he heard not the tiniest crack of any one of this building's bricks contracting in the huge cold night. He went through the door, and as he closed it the latch clicked to like a camera taking a portrait of his back. Motionless now, he peered between the landing banisters into a black fog that stirred in none of its particles and only his heart thudded at the centre of this palace of refrigeration.

He glided along the landing, and then up a flight of marble stairs, three at a time, and up a second flight, and a third, and into what, from his sense of its walls and ceiling narrowing him in, he guessed to be corridor. Twenty paces down the corridor he stopped. In the icy wall to his right, there was the handle he wanted, which

he turned to open the door of a small room he entered. Fresh air now penetrated the wool of his ski mask: it came from the high window he had struggled in through just two minutes ago.

He egressed the window backwards, pulling himself up by his hands which had hold of the guttering above, and, as he swung round the overhang of the gutter, he did not see down into space that far below ended in level, hard denial of braggadocio on high. His toes at last in the gutter, he stretched up and out in a star on the sloping roof, then crabwise inched right till he could drop onto a flat ledge.

There he took his bearings in a nightscape of lights cumulatively glowing yellow beneath a sky whose ragged muslin clouds took on tinges of blue as they tore across the moon.

It was bitter cold.

Five storeys below, the exhaust of a Rolls Royce drifted through the hard light of a No Entry sign, and <sup>the</sup>Rolls Royce's perfected drone disappeared street by street into the city's low roar that now and again was descanted by wind keening in some aerals overhead. To the left, a box with louvred vents housed the inflow of an air-conditioning system. Crouching next to it now, he heard a woman moaning, "Say you love me, please, or I'll die of shame." A man grunted and bedsprings twanged as if the man had jumped to his feet. Sounds of a scuffle filtered up through the vents, and horrified female gasps and female words, "Help me somebody please."

His ladder, at the far parapet to which he had crept, was still there, thank god. He placed it across the drop between this building and its neighbour, and on all fours crawled downwards into the sag - over a street as clear as a photograph but in his same medium of empty air - then crawled up to the other side, where he pulled the ladder in after him. Below this parapet, as he had left them, were the briefcase, western boots, and anorak. He ripped

off his ski mask and gloves and training shoes, and stowed them in the briefcase on top of the statuette; then he put in the bleeper by which his look-out in the street had not needed to alert him.

A minute later, briefcase in hand, he was ready to go, but he stood listening intently to a roof so silent he suspected a trap. Trap or not, there was no other way down than the emergency stairs, which he did not make a move towards until the moon went behind a thick cloud.

Less than thirty seconds later he was in the street walking away from the scene of his crime with the relaxed gait of a man of means.

Outside the pub where he had arranged to rendezvous with his lookout, he faltered, irrationally certain that the police were lying in wait behind the swing doors, yet in the Lounge Bar no one was watching his accomplice, who seemed ready to plunge, a suicide, into the deep V neck of a barmaid whose two eyes were like Pernod clouding from within as she saw an admirer taken away from her.

At the rear of the pub the two men locked themselves into a single cubicle of the Gents.

The briefcase was exchanged, but words were not.

A minute later, with empty hands, the burglar passed through the pub's back gate into a cul-de-sac lined with battered, lidless dustbins. For an instant of foreboding, he felt that the bins were waiting to fill with the goods his cash would consume, but he walked past them, and on, to the terrace house of his brother-in-law. Its door opened as if it were the entrance to a Victorian catacomb, barred, however, by his brother-in-law, whose face was like an identikit being jogged as it said, "Hello."

In the lounge they disturbed a woman watching Startrek. She eyed her brother with an unnerving stare of greed and fear combined; then she went to the TV and decreased its volume to zero while her husband poured gins. She handed round the drinks, and, after omitting to toast one another, the three of them sipped cautiously.



"What's the time?" demanded the visitor.

"Ten forty-five," murmured his sister.

"And I've been here since nine?" she was asked in the same tone of voice.

The woman searched her husband's face for the face of the man she had married and he gazed back at her as if he thought she thought he was someone else, and, outside the continuing guessing game and feud of their marriage, the visitor laid five £10 notes next to his almost full glass on the low coffee table.

"Yes. You've been here since nine," the man estimated, "hasn't he? hasn't he, dear?"

"Yes. Nine."

The two men then drove in the brother-in-law's van through Highbury to a block of flats in Islington. This was to maintain the alibi that had just been bought: it was understood that if its truth had to be sworn in court more money would change hands. By now the statuette had been fenced and the briefcase full of forensically incriminating gear had been loaded with a brick and dropped in the Thames, so only one link to the crime remained. That was the Security Officer. Probably he would confess to the police and maybe he was talking at that very moment, but he could only point the finger at a man who when bribing him to unplug the alarms for that vital ten minutes had worn a blond wig, sunglasses, and, to increase his height, cuban heels.

The brother-in-law parked the van and had to trot to keep up as they entered the block, crossed the hall, climbed twelve zig-zag flights of stairs, and went down a sixth-floor corridor.

They stopped and the man in front tapped on a door which, after a wait, opened slowly, revealing a woman with brilliant eyes. The thief turned from the eyes and said to his brother-in-law, "Goodnight."

"Oh yes, goodnight," was the reply from a figure who diminished down the corridor as if he were pushing a barrow loaded with scrap. From the gloomy distance, this badly-

dressed, furtive-looking man looked back and darkly called, "Be lucky."

The thief joined his wife in the bed she had risen from to answer the front door, and they lay side by side, not touching, she in one of her few nightdresses that he had not given her. He could no longer understand whom he had been in those days when he had always rushed into the flat with nothing else in his mind but to go to work on her like a pneumatic drill. After all her explosive orgasms, he wondered that she was still shaped like a woman, whom other men, at least, lusted after just as he had once.

"I'm going to leave you," she said.

He felt like retorting, "So leave me."

After a while, though, his life began to seem futile without her.

He rolled onto his side, facing her, and could see the livid line of her profile against the dim wall, a wall vague as if through it he might discern some consoling human sign. Her profile's lips, now parting and closing three times in saying, "I mean it," seemed to take in a shadowy hope that he felt was his.

"No!" she shouted, wrestling away from him, but in no time her body, whoever that was, welcomed him without reserve.

He began to spin round a tiny, living Venus that was gleaming lasciviously with gold. If he grabbed it, crushed it to nothing in his fist, would he absorb its strange erotic power? His hand moved to pluck the figure from its darkness but, when his fingertips brushed the gold, he lost his balance and toppled over and fell headlong into what felt like an endless hole. A window in the side he was falling past lit up and out of it popped the head of his wife, happy as he had never seen her in life. "Goodbye," she said. He laboured to find some words to say but another window lit up showing a teacher he remembered from Primary School. She was shaking her head. Below the teacher there glared the face of a lady magistrate.

"Do you want to spend your whole life in prison?" she enquired. Following her, a detective pronounced, "You'll do ten for this you bastard."

A long way below the detective a prison governor fixed him with sharp, inhuman eyes. "I might as well be addressing a brick wall," he sighed, and then he laughed an ugly laugh that followed its human object down the hole into even thicker blackness. No faces materialized for quite a time, until a grey-wigged judge suddenly shone forth. "You are an enemy of society. I am sentencing you to..." But the man in the dock was plummeting too fast to hear the length of his term, though it had to be life.

The bedroom door was being broken down.

Twisting round, he separated from his wife, and was blinded by the beam of a heavy-duty torch. Before he could react, the centre light switched on, bleakening four walls that, newly solid, closed off rescue or redemption. At the foot of the bed crouched two rigid detectives, like figures in a manual, each aiming a .38 revolver at his brain, and in the doorway behind them thronged uniformed policemen and women, gaping in. To stop the howling noise he shut his mouth, yet the howling continued. Thickly he understood that it came from his wife hidden under the white sheet she had dragged over her head.

He put up his hands and got out of bed, and the police made way for him as nakedly he strolled into the lounge where a search warrant was waved under his nose.

"You're coming with us," commanded a senior detective.

Two policewomen dashed into the bedroom and the wife quieted to the relief of everyone, though not a single face relaxed. A detective appeared with clothing in his arms, but he was still pointing a gun at his nude quarry, whom he allowed to dress before locking handcuffs onto his wrists. Even as their prisoner was being hustled out of the flat the uniformed police began tearing it apart.

Nobody spoke in the lift or in the front hall of the block or in the police car or in the police station all

the way to an underground Interview Room, where the prisoner was left alone. He sat on one of two chairs at a battered table, and studied the grain lines that pencil points had deepened. Every single channel led indirectly or directly to one or other of the table's precipitous edges. He was trapped on the table top, unable to leap to freedom.

There were hours to go before dawn and this windowless room, despite an iron radiator that smelled of the nineteenth-century foundry it had been cast in, held no more warmth than a railway platform.

The prisoner's senses were so bared that he could hear a detective going up the steps to the side entrance of the police station, hear him walk down a hallway, enter an office, open a filing cabinet, pull out a dossier, shut the cabinet, exit the office, descend a flight of stone steps, walk down the corridor outside this room... The detective opened the door, sat down across the table, and began to read from the dossier:

"Taking away a car... Burglary... Resisting arrest... Conspiring to rob... Armed robbery... Etcetera..."

The detective then authored a swelling silence before closing the dossier as on a pressed flower he had reprieved from burning.

"You're a shit," he commented, "and I don't like you living in the area of my jurisdiction."

"Hard luck," the prisoner said, his words outing before he had thought them.

More silence, signed only by the detective, who eventually said:

"It's your hard luck actually. From now on I'm going to go after you day and night, night and day. You'll make a mistake sooner or later. And I'll catch you."

The detective stood up, and tucked his dossier under one arm and almost marched to the door which he opened but did not go through. He called to the policeman on guard outside, "Lock him up," and he looked back lingeringly at the prisoner, who was studying the fingernails of his right

hand. Then the detective leaned into the corridor as if it were an uphill slog all the way now to his pension. The prisoner was escorted the other way down this corridor to a narrow flight of concrete steps, and down these, then along a darker corridor which smelled of unwashed bodies, and into a dirty cell. The policeman took off the prisoner's handcuffs before leaving the cell and turning a loud iron key in its door. Locked away, the prisoner sat down on the hard bed and looked up at the light, a glaucomatous bulb covered by a bowl of reinforced glass, and he looked at the hard walls which seemed to harden further as if their solidity was extending to the boundaries of his consciousness. So here he was again trapped in a lift stuck nearer hell than heaven.

Three hours later, released as arbitrarily as he had been confined, he walked home into the dawn breaking over the city that by day he regarded as asleep, swarming with people to whom he did not credit the emotion which in him night sharpened till it could cut through the bars he met everywhere.

At home, his wife, who had cleaned up the flat, made two cups of instant coffee which she set down on the kitchen table they sat either side of.

"What are you going to do today?" she asked.

He gave a start, for even in so brief a spell of custody he had broken the habit of making plans.

"Go to the gym. Weight training."

She shut her eyes as if her burden, of neglect, was finally too great.

He thought of his muscles glistening with sweat and the swollen blue veins snaking beneath his skin, and an image came back to him from a glossy magazine, of a nude woman photographed upwards from a position between her knees. She was caught in the act of pulling a T-shirt over her head, her arms snared in the garment above her leaned-back body which was as inviting as runway to one longing for take-off into what?

He did have the phone numbers of a girl who for cash

would willingly assume the stance of the woman in the magazine, so he would take it from there, because he had to try. He knew already, though, that it would probably end up with his whipping the girl's buttocks until he shot himself into thin air. The distant premonition of those whip marks, that like thin red bars caged in his desire to love, paled as his wife's face came back into focus.

They finished their coffees in silence. He felt she understood him. She waited for him to say he would stay home after all. He got up and walked out of the kitchen, she following.

In the hall he donned his Crombie overcoat while his wife framed herself in the lounge doorway. On a row of cloakroom hooks to her right, their coats hung like discontinued personalities. She leaned against one jamb, folded her arms.

"Do you love me?" she asked.

He stopped buttoning his coat and met her eyes. She blinked and looked down. He buttoned the last two buttons.

"When you get back tonight, I'll be gone."

"You don't have to go."

In the doorway that over the years she had made her proscenium for the delivery of farewells, nothing changed but her eyes which began shedding tears.

He left, and she listened to him thumping down the corridor, listened to the lift, and, after a gap, to his car as he backed it out of the car-park behind the block. She did not budge, though if it had been possible she would have lain open-legged in the path of his car, for she craved what he had become for her, a vicious machine, which, as it tortured also processed her emotions into reliable, calculating attitudes that protected her from men.

Eventually her tears dried. She laughed, and said aloud, "I'm leaving you today." Still laughing, she went into the kitchen. There she smashed the coffee grinder, the percolator, the electric kettle, the microwave oven, the freezer, the fridge, and the transistor radio. Still

laughing - but all the while hearing herself with a mixture of affection and panic - she went from kitchen to lounge, where she smashed the hifi, the colour TV, the standard lamp, the bottles and glasses of the cocktail cabinet, the cabinet itself, the ashtrays, the mirrors, and the glass of the glass-topped tables. After that she stopped laughing and went to bed, and resolved not to move until she was absolutely certain what to do next.

In the gym, meanwhile, her husband on his back bench-pressed a seven-foot cadmium steel bar with 30 Kg on each end. At this moment, when the man of nerves was eclipsed by the man of muscles, he recited one of his poems to himself:

I do not work.  
I make money.  
I use people.  
I am stamina.  
I live with the dead.  
I am a spirit,  
for ever and ever.